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Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana Preservation and Interpretation Strategy

prepared for the Montana Heritage Commission
December 2000



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Report

The Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission (Commission) manages state-owned historic resources in Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana. These resources include 248 buildings, some 300,000 artifacts, and 20 concessions. The Commission recognizes that it is difficult to make daily management decisions concerning these historic resources without an overall plan guiding the decisions to make them consistent and cohesive. This report has been prepared in order to provide guiding principles and philosophical underpinnings for the Commission to use as a basis for making decisions and achieving identified management objectives over the next five years (2001-2005) in the areas of building and site preservation, curation, and interpretation.

The guidelines are intentionally non-specific and flexible in order to allow for changing circumstances and new information down the road. Actions and treatments are proposed as recommendations rather than as set-in-stone requirements. An attempt has been made to look well beyond the existing conditions and envision a future for the historic sites that will give visitors a memorable, meaningful experience and that will also protect the buildings, artifacts, and settings that make them so special. Although costs of proposed actions have not been detailed in this report, an attempt has been made to take costs and practicality into account in the implementation section.

This strategy attempts to provide a balance between the Commission's goals of generating revenue, protecting the historic resources, and providing effective, high-quality, accurate interpretation. It also attempts to acknowledge the constraints faced by the Commission and to recommend ways to work within these constraints. The managers of Virginia City and Nevada City are faced with uncertain and limited funding, shortages of staff, a complicated array of tasks, many interested parties, and the certainty that unanticipated challenges will arise in the future.

This strategy is a management tool that can guide the Commission into a desired future and provide guideposts for measuring success. Commission staff must not store the report on a shelf; they should refer to the strategy continuously in the process of managing the state-owned properties at Virginia City and Nevada City. In other words, planning efforts will continue to be on-going, with these guidelines being modified or expanded as needed.

In general, the Commission should strive to do a few more things well each year. Changes should be gradual and should be tested whenever possible before committing large commitments of money and time. The Commission should think big but take little steps.

Methodology

In April 2000, the Commission contracted with historian Kathryn L. McKay of Tracks of the Past of Columbia Falls, Montana, to prepare this strategy. The previous year, McKay had prepared a comprehensive bibliography on Alder Gulch for the Commission, so she was already familiar with the states' properties, with the history of Alder Gulch, and with some of the issues involved in managing these properties. It was understood from the start that experts in all the disciplines covered in this report would assist with the development of the strategy, along with staff and other interested parties.

The initial stages of the project involved soliciting input from the people who will be affected by the strategy (Commission staff and commissioners, Montana Historical Society staff, and residents of Virginia City) and from managers and other employees at historic sites throughout North America. McKay discussed specific questions with many individuals, drawing on their experience and deep understanding of issues faced by managers of historic towns. These discussions, and the author's first-hand knowledge of many of these sites, helped develop an understanding of the distinct niche that Virginia

City and Nevada City, Montana, can occupy within the context of similar sites in western North America.

Historic sites contacted for input on this strategy:

- **Bannack State Park, Bannack, MT**
- **Barkerville Historic Town, Barkerville, BC**
- **Bodie State Historic Park, Bridgeport, CA**
- **Columbia State Historic Park, Columbia, CA**
- **Fort Steele Heritage Town, Cranbrook, BC**
- **Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, Deerlodge, MT**
- **Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Skagway, AK**
- **Klondike National Historic Sites, Dawson, YT**
- **Lowell National Historical Park, Lowell, MA**
- **Mystic Seaport, Mystic, CT**
- **South Park City, Fairplay, CO**
- **South Pass City, WY**
- **Tonopah Historic Mining Park, Tonopah, NV**
- **Yankee Fork Historic Area, Challis, ID**

The Commission arranged for five "outside experts" who work at or are involved in planning efforts for other historic sites to participate in a brainstorming session in Virginia City. The purpose of the session, held Oct. 19 and 20, was to go over questions related to this strategy in some detail, examining all assumptions and making recommendations on specific strategies and phasing. Most Commission staff and approximately ten other interested people attended the roundtable sessions as observers.

Many ideas put forward at this session were added to this strategy.

The draft report was submitted to the Commission for review in November 2000. Open houses for public comments on the draft plan were held in Butte and Virginia City in early 2001.

The following list outlines the broad, underlying philosophical choices and assumptions that were made in preparing this strategy. These are discussed in greater detail in the following pages:

**Words of wisdom from the
“Dream Team”:**

- ❖ **Think big, take little steps**
- ❖ **Test new ideas; it’s okay to fail**

- The Commission is committed to long-term stewardship of the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City – buildings, landscapes, and artifacts - for the enjoyment and education of the public.
- The Commission is committed to historical truth and accuracy in building preservation and interpretation.
- Good planning is essential for all aspects of management of the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City.
- Neither Virginia City nor Nevada City is to be managed as an abandoned ghost town.
- All historic preservation work on the buildings of both Virginia City and Nevada City will be done according to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.
- Reconstruction of entire buildings is discouraged. Reconstruction of features of buildings is acceptable.
- Acquiring new buildings and land in Virginia City is possible but generally discouraged. Moving in new buildings to Nevada City is possible, with certain limitations.
- The cultural landscape is an important resource.
- The entire collection of artifacts should be inventoried prior to the more time-consuming work of cataloguing and accessioning.
- Artifacts that are seriously threatened by environmental conditions should be relocated or protected.
- Good interpretation enhances the visitor experience, allowing visitors to find meaning and linkages in the buildings, artifacts, and settings.
- Interpretation is for everyone (visitors, school groups, area residents).
- Good orientation of the visitor at the visitor center is critical.
- Interpretation at Virginia City will emphasize layers of history and change over time up to the present, with emphasis on the pre-World War II period, and will tell its story in the regional context.
- Interpretation at Nevada City will focus on two topics: the Bovey story (1941 to 1997) and life in a generic Montana town from the 1860s to the 1910s.
- Interpretation of state-owned properties will offer personal and non-personal services and a variety of media choices to appeal to different learning styles, offer a stimulating experience, and provide interpretation for visitors with varying amounts of time available.
- Some of the building displays will remain the same as they are today (perhaps with changes to protect particular artifacts); others will be completely redone.
- Living history, including period trades, will be tried in Nevada City but is generally not appropriate for Virginia City except during special events.

- Montana Heritage Commission interpretation may include properties not owned by the state, in cooperation with other property owners.
- Every concession should be part of the interpretive experience.
- The Commission will review and modify this strategy annually through 2005.
- Standards for evaluating the preservation, curation, and interpretive programs will be created and measured on a regular basis.

This report does not make recommendations in the areas of management, operations, finances, and partnerships except as they relate directly to historic preservation, curation, or interpretation. Certain topics are not discussed at all because they are not within the scope of the strategy, such as the organizational structure of the Commission and operational issues of the Alder Gulch Short Line Railroad. Others are treated lightly, such as fundraising and marketing issues and working with partners and private property owners.

In the chapters that follow, recommendations are shaded. A few critical guidelines are highlighted by bold type. Steps that the Commission is already working on are not mentioned in the recommendations, but they are often discussed in the background and guiding principles sections.

History of Virginia City and Nevada City Up to 1997

Virginia City and Nevada City lie along Alder Gulch, the site of the richest placer gold strike in the Rocky Mountains. During the first three seasons in the early 1860s, an estimated \$30 million worth of gold was removed from the gulch, and during subsequent years gold has continued to be extracted from placer and lode mines.

Alder Gulch was part of a broad expansion of mining from California into many parts of the North American West that took place from 1848 through the 1860s. Experienced miners traveled to the successive mining frontiers, bringing with them mining technology and social traditions. Placer gold was discovered in 1862 in Bannack, and on May 26, 1863, six prospectors found rich diggings at Alder Gulch, some sixty miles northeast of Bannack. By the middle of the next year, about 10,000 people were living in a number of communities lining Alder Gulch, including Virginia City and Nevada City.

For the first several years of placer mining along Alder Gulch, miners used hand tools such as sluice boxes to separate the gold from the gravels. In 1867, hydraulicking was introduced to the area. Jets of pressurized water washed down the dirt, leaving behind piles of rocks and hydraulic cuts. The timber on the surrounding hillsides was clearcut to provide building materials, mine timber, and fuel. From 1898 through 1922, large floating dredges chewed up the ground, destroying several communities in their path and leaving behind distinctive tailings and dredge ponds as far upstream as Virginia City. Smaller dryland dredges returned to the gulch in the 1930s, after a rise in the price of gold. The town of Virginia City itself, unlike many other mining communities, was never dug up and destroyed because it had not been established on top of gold-bearing

gravels. All of the original town of Nevada City west of the highway was eradicated by dredging operations in the early 1900s.

Lode mining in the upper section of Alder Gulch, although never as productive as placer mining, began at the community known as Summit. A number of mills concentrated ore from these mines in the 1860s and 1870s. Lode mining revitalized somewhat in the years following 1881, when the arrival of a railroad in Montana increased the demand for silver and when better milling processes were introduced, but by the 1910s most of the lode claims were being worked by small crews of leasers. A branch-line railroad reached Alder in 1901, but it did not extend the additional ten miles to Virginia City because the tracks would have interfered with the dredging operations underway at that time. Lode mining revived again in the 1930s when the price of gold rose significantly. All mining for gold in Alder Gulch closed down temporarily in 1942, however, because of a war-time prohibition on gold mining, although one silica mine had a relatively large payroll for a brief period during the war.

The mining activity along Alder Gulch had far-reaching effects. It stimulated the formation of government on all levels, the increase in settlement and use of the northern Rockies, and the evolution of regional transportation systems. Gold from Alder Gulch contributed to the national economy both during and after the Civil War. The town of Virginia City moved quickly through the phases of settlement, camp, and town, having at its peak some 5,000 inhabitants. These phases encompassed tents, log cabins, vernacular frame buildings, and commercial buildings with false fronts, plus (at least in Virginia City) high-style residences and commercial buildings. Substantial business blocks reflected the residents' belief in the permanence of the mining district and the towns along Alder Gulch. The layered remnants of each phase are evident in the buildings that remain today. Remodelings and additions and other modifications bear witness to the town's unfolding history.

The western gold rushes of the 1860s led Congress to create five new territories. Alder Gulch was in Idaho Territory until May 1864, when Montana Territory was created. Bannack, site of the first gold strike within the territory, became the first capital, but one year later the first territorial legislature decided to move the capital to Virginia City. Bannack immediately declined, while Virginia City's star rose for a few more years. The discovery of gold in Last Chance Gulch (Helena) in the summer of 1864, however, foretold the coming decline of Virginia City. Many of her residents soon moved to Helena. Virginia City's population collapsed to only a few hundred in the early 1870s and never recovered. In 1875, the territorial capital was relocated to Helena. After 1900, few new buildings were constructed in Virginia City, and many old structures collapsed, were destroyed by fire, or were torn down.

Virginia City served as the hub of a vast transportation network until 1875, with supplies coming in from Salt Lake City, Portland, Omaha, and Fort Benton. The "Social City" was also the cultural focal point of the territory. The population of Alder Gulch was diverse in the early years, including Euroamericans, Chinese (in 1870, about one third of the residents of Virginia City were Chinese), Bannock Indians, Mexicans, and African

Americans. The community remained a service center until the 1880s. While many of the miners may not have struck it rich, some of the merchants did attain financial rewards from their time at Alder Gulch. A wide variety of businesses clustered along lower Wallace Street and South Jackson Street, and residences were built along Idaho Street and on the south slopes. In 1868, Virginia City had some 1,200 buildings (it has 237 major structures today). Social organizations flourished. A number of newspapers were published out of Virginia City over the years, and several schools were established. In 1866, Virginia City became the first town in Montana to get a telegraph.

Interest in preserving and memorializing the history of Virginia City solidified in 1899 at an annual meeting of the Montana Historical Society. Henry Edgar, one of the discoverers of gold at Alder Gulch, led a crowd to the site where the first gold had been found. In 1907, the graves of the five road agents buried on Boot Hill were exhumed, identified, and reburied, and new headboards were erected. More tourists began to make their way to Virginia City in the 1920s, as the popularity of automobiles grew. The Thompson-Hickman Museum was built in 1918 and the Vigilance Club, founded in 1938, maintains the collection. In 1928, a massive marble marker was placed at the discovery site. Rank's Drug in Virginia City housed a drugstore museum for many years. In 1937, just two years after Congress assigned the National Park Service responsibility for surveying historic properties of national significance, that agency prepared a report on Virginia City that concluded that the town warranted consideration of national

recognition. At that time, some 6,500 visitors came to the community each summer.

The Boveys' mission statement for Virginia City:

To preserve and protect original buildings, recognizing and retaining most of the changes which have taken place over time, retaining as much original material as possible, and if reconstructions are necessary, to reproduce authentic copies of missing buildings using old materials to retain the overall original appearance of Virginia City; to collect appropriate artifacts with which to furnish these buildings and display them in their total context, and to operate certain appropriate businesses to serve the public and to allow the public to "experience the past" by participating in it (in such businesses as the Bale of Hay Saloon, Fairweather Inn, or Opera House), profits from such businesses, if any, being secondary.

Virginia City's declining fortunes began to revive gradually after 1944, when Montana rancher and state legislator Charlie Bovey and his wife Sue first visited the small community. Captivated by Virginia City's old buildings, the Boveys initiated an extensive privately financed preservation program. They and the Montana Historic Landmark Society (funded by the Boveys) began to preserve some of the deteriorating buildings in the community. Starting with the purchase of the Blake House in 1945, by 1978 they owned one-third of the town. The Boveys did not just purchase and stabilize or restore existing buildings. They also built reconstructions of original buildings along lower Wallace Street using historic photographs as guides. They installed static displays in some of the buildings, furnished with artifacts associated with the

buildings or items they had collected from around the state. Other buildings were adapted to modern purposes, and some received new fronts.

The Boveys tried to present a full picture of life in the past. They were less concerned with finding museum-quality, perfect artifacts than they were with presenting everyday objects in the context of a furnished building display. They wanted their buildings to look lived in, so they felt that well-worn artifacts (even ones that were broken or seriously deteriorated) enhanced the authenticity of the display.

In 1947, in response to requests from visitors, the Boveys moved into the tourist business. They formed the Virginia City Trading Company to provide services such as lodging, restaurants, theater, gas station, and gift shops (this business was renamed Bovey Restorations, Inc., in 1972). They converted the Buford Block into the Wells Fargo Coffee House. Soon, the Virginia City Players, a theatrical company founded by Larry Barsness, began performing in the Smith and Boyd Livery/Opera House. Housing for the actors was constructed next to the Gilbert Brewery. From 1946 until 1973, visitors could buy soft drinks and beer in the brewery. This closed down because of low revenues, however, and a branch of the Virginia City Players began performing evening programs in the building in 1984. The Fairweather Inn took all telephone reservations for the Opera House, Brewery Follies, and the two hotels. Bus and school group tours were arranged at the Bovey's main office.

Although these businesses operated by Bovey Restorations did bring in some income, the operation was always a losing proposition. In reality, good wheat crops in the 1940s and the sale of Bovey's sheep ranch funded the Boveys' preservation work.

The Boveys' mission statement for Nevada City:

To provide a 'safe haven' for endangered historic buildings from throughout Montana, and to collect and display artifacts to fully furnish the buildings, thus creating a display representing not just one certain time or place, but, in general, a total picture of life in the "old days."

The historic community of Nevada City was located approximately one mile downstream of Virginia City. It too was established in June 1863 to serve the miners and others rushing in to Alder Gulch, and in the early 1860s the road between the two communities was lined with buildings. At one time, dozens of stores and cabins extended back about six blocks on the east side of the present highway. By 1876, however, Nevada City was almost deserted. Buildings were moved away or were torn down for lumber or firewood. In 1878, the

Fenner family received a mineral patent on most of the townsite and sold lots to the remaining residents. By about 1900, only five or six households were left. The Frank Finney family remained on their property in the town until 1951. Their refusal to sell their land to the dredge company working the gulch in the early 1900s is the reason that half the town was protected from destruction by dredging operations.

In the late 1950s, Charlie Bovey's attention expanded to include Nevada City. For almost twenty years, Bovey had displayed old Montana buildings at the Great Falls fairgrounds in an exhibit known as "Old Town." In 1959, Bovey was asked to remove the Old Town exhibit. He carefully disassembled the buildings and hauled them out of Great Falls, relocating them on Nevada City's back streets. The buildings that Bovey moved to Nevada City were placed on sites where buildings had previously stood, so the basic layout of the historic community was retained. Nevada City evolved into a place where the Boveys put buildings that were doomed to destruction if left on their original sites. They moved their last building to Nevada City in 1978. All of the moved-in buildings had originally been built in other locations in Montana or in Yellowstone National Park.

The Boveys also constructed new buildings in Nevada City as part of their effort to make it a display representing life in an early Montana community. They restored the front street to look as much as possible like a photograph of the original town taken in 1865. They leveled the dredge tailings across the highway from the buildings in Nevada City and established a railroad museum there in order to protect railroad equipment from being scrapped, and in 1964 they built a 1.5-mile railroad line linking Nevada City and Virginia City. Visitors could then take a short ride behind a Dinky steam engine donated by the Anaconda Company.

The Boveys combined the philosophies of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and Deerfield Village in Michigan, but their effort was distinctively personal and evolved over time. They passionately believed in preserving and protecting original buildings, generally in a state they termed "suspended deterioration." They believed it was important to reproduce missing buildings to retain the overall appearance of Virginia City and to furnish as many buildings as possible with appropriate artifacts displayed in their "total context." Their businesses serving visitors reflected their goal of allowing the public to experience the past by participating in it. Thus, the nightly entertainment provided old-style theater shows and vaudeville; the Bale of Hay Saloon was furnished with historic player pianos and nickelodeons; and the Fairweather Inn did not necessarily provide all the modern comforts desired by its guests.

The Boveys poured a great deal of energy and money into collecting artifacts from southwestern Montana and other areas. Their goals were to use the artifacts to enhance the visitors' experience and in some cases to protect the objects (e.g., the railroad-related objects and stained glass windows from the state capitol). Generally, the purchase of a particular set of artifacts dictated the next new display. For example, the contents of the Butte Carriage Works inspired the wagon shop in Nevada City. The Boveys did not believe in restoring artifacts. Thus, buggies were protected from rain and snow and kept in a dry place, but their finishes were not restored.

To the Boveys, the original buildings in Virginia City were almost shrines to the past. The retention of original, weathered materials was very important. Because Charlie saw the buildings as representing a continuum of time, later modifications were left in place, such as knob-and-tube wiring, additions, and 1930s linoleum. They loved "time

capsules" such as the McGovern Store. They considered most of the buildings too fragile and historically significant to be used for anything but displays.

Interpretation during the Bovey period was largely informal and self-guided. The Boveys felt that providing information in the form of signs or brochures was intrusive, but they did provide guided tours to special groups. Beginning in 1947, the Boveys encouraged visitors to stop in the lobby of the Fairweather Inn for information; this served as an informal orientation center. Most visitors, however, wandered up to buildings, peered inside, and used their own imagination and knowledge to come to an understanding of the display. In 1977, Bovey Restorations curator John Ellingsen and others published a paperback book entitled, *"If These Walls Could Talk: the History of Buildings of Virginia City, Montana"*. This book provided some historical background on significant structures within the community.

The City of Virginia City printed a walking tour brochure for their town in approximately 1995, written mostly by John Ellingsen. This brochure, sold for \$1 to cover expenses, formed the basis for the current walking tour brochure for Virginia City, which was funded by the Commission and Gold West Country.

Charlie Bovey died in 1978 and his wife Sue in 1988. Because their preservation philosophies sometimes differed, the philosophy of Bovey Restorations changed after 1978 and then again after 1988, when their son Ford took over. For example, Bovey Restorations tried street theater after Charlie and Sue Bovey had died. This consisted of three employees providing frequent re-enactments of gun fights in Nevada City. Some visitors enjoyed these performances, but small children often cried and the actors became bored with the repetitive show.

The family's efforts over several decades provided one model for historic preservation and boosted Virginia City's economy, helping to keep the community alive and vital. After the death of Charlie Bovey in 1978, little more than very basic maintenance was done on any of the buildings in Virginia City or Nevada City. By 1989, many of the Bovey-owned properties were for sale.

Visitors over the decades have expressed great appreciation of the Boveys' work. Some people were particularly taken with Virginia City's original buildings fully stocked with artifacts. Others preferred Nevada City, saying that it allowed them to step back in time.

Most of the Bovey displays have remained essentially the same since the day they were created. A few have been altered or no longer exist. Displays in the latter category include the penny arcade in the building that today houses the Montana Picture Gallery (the machines were mostly relocated to the Nevada City Music Hall and the Bale of Hay Saloon in approximately 1979 in order to protect them better); the automobile museum in the Village Pump building (this was closed and converted to storage in the early 1960s when the state required the Boveys to stop selling gasoline there); and the Dudley Garage (this displayed the best cars in the collection from about 1974 until 1983).

The Virginia City Preservation Alliance and the Vigilance Club of Virginia City cooperatively operated an information center in the Adobetown schoolhouse in Virginia City before and after the state purchase of the Bovey properties in 1997. In 1997 and 1998, they also offered personally conducted tours of Virginia City. In 1999, the information center was moved to the Virginia City depot and was run with limited hours by the Virginia City Preservation Alliance.

Virginia City today has approximately 150 year-round residents and about 300 summer residents. It sits at an elevation of 5,680 feet, in a bowl along the edge of Alder Gulch. Approximately 70,000 visitors come through Virginia City annually.

The community is relatively isolated and is not close to a major highway. Montana Highway 287, a paved highway maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation, runs right through Virginia City along lower Wallace Street and bisects the core historic area. The other streets in the town have gravel surfaces and are maintained by the city. Virginia City is located 85 miles from West Yellowstone. This is one of the major gateways to Yellowstone National Park, which in 1993 had 2.9 million visitors. The nearest commercial air service is approximately 70 miles distant, in Belgrade or Butte, Montana.

Montana Highway 287 also runs through Nevada City. The railroad yard and associated displays are on one side of the highway and the gated area and almost all of the furnished building displays are on the other. Nevada City has fewer than five permanent residents. One of them has lived for many years in a moved-in historic residence inside the gates of Nevada City.

Overview of the Historical Significance of Virginia City and Nevada City

Virginia City

The significance of Virginia City's role in the nation's history has been recognized since the 1860s. This recognition was formalized in 1961, when Virginia City was designated a National Historic Landmark for its significant role in western expansion and for its status as a relatively intact town of the 1860s. In 1976, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the present boundary of the landmark was established. The National Historic Landmark nomination includes the townsite and about 1,600 acres surrounding the city limits, encompassing a segment of Alder Gulch and a viewshed approximately two miles square along the lower hills around the town. There are 157 contributing structures within Virginia City. The core historic area lies along the westernmost four blocks of Wallace Street. Noncontributing structures include the Bovey reconstructions, modern buildings, and the Alder Gulch Short Line.

The consulting firm Dames & Moore performed a comprehensive inventory in 1990 of all the standing structures within the townsite of Virginia City plus a historic archaeological inventory of the land outside the city limits but within the National Historic Landmark boundary. They recorded 237 sites (some with several buildings)

within the townsite. They determined that the period of historical significance was 1863-1875.

Most of the 1860s placer gold camps in the western United States, such as Florence, Idaho, have disappeared. Others have tourism economies but retain little of their 1860s character, such as Breckenridge, Colorado. Still others have disappeared under later towns, such as Helena, Montana, or Deadwood, South Dakota. And others, such as Bannack State Park in Montana, do not survive as living communities. Of the dozen territorial capitals designated in the first years of the Rocky Mountain territories' existence, only Virginia City and Bannack retain the scale of the 1860s territorial capitals on the mining frontier – small settlements located in vast, isolated landscapes.

Virginia City is today considered the best-preserved example of the many placer mining camps that flourished during the 1860s throughout the Rocky Mountain West. It provides an exceptional sample of commercial architecture of the mid-nineteenth century. The greatest concentration of historic buildings dates to the 1870s, but some of the buildings' later modifications also have historical significance. The surrounding landscape has been disturbed very little since the mining era ended in 1942. Its historic buildings, structures, and settings are significant for their association with the evolution of a frontier community and society based on the mining of precious metals. Although not formally included in the National Historic Landmark nomination, the buildings constructed or reconstructed by Charlie and Sue Bovey are now seen as contributing to the significance of Virginia City, because part of its significance today lies in the efforts of the Boveys to preserve the buildings.

In 1980 the National Park Service completed a reconnaissance survey that recommended a study to examine alternatives for future protection of the resources. This "special resource study" was initiated in 1994, two years after the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed the community as one of the nation's most endangered historic places. The Park Service held a series of public meetings to test residents' feelings about preservation, and the town's residents played an active role in the planning effort.

The Park Service study examined ways to preserve Virginia City's historic character and to maintain the small-town quality of life for the residents. The agency examined five alternatives that were distinguished primarily by who would acquire and manage the key historic buildings of historic value. None of the alternatives considered Nevada City. In fact, the study focused on the buildings dating from the 1863-76 era in the core area on lower Wallace Street.

Virginia City residents have long been proud of their community's historic resources. A 1992 community assessment that involved interviews with every 88 year-round residents, 18 non-residents, and 9 seasonal residents found almost total agreement that preservation of local history and historic sites should be the town's top priority and that outside assistance would be needed to achieve this goal. During this period, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance formed in order to promote and protect the town's history.

In 1995 and 1996, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office conducted surveys of people across Montana. Virginia City was specifically identified in these surveys as a place of preservation concern. Virginia City is associated with the statewide historic theme of the territorial period.

Nevada City

Nevada City is quite different from Virginia City in that it is today largely a created community. Much of the original town is long gone, the victim of dredging or fires or salvage activities. Only twelve of the buildings are original to the site; the rest have been moved in or reconstructed. The significance of the community, however, lies in its ability to tell the story of the efforts of Charlie and Sue Bovey to preserve a "Montana treasure chest" of buildings and artifacts to share with visitors and impart a feeling of life in an early Montana community. Two of the original properties (the Byam and Finney houses) have been recently nominated to the National Register. In the year 2009, most of the buildings in Nevada City will have been at their present locations for at least fifty years. The recreated town will then, if not sooner, be eligible for National Register listing as a historic district.

Goals and Accomplishments of the Montana Heritage Commission, 1997-2000

**Montana Heritage
Preservation and Development
Commission mission statement
(adopted December 2000):**

**Manage, develop and operate
Heritage Commission
properties by preserving,
stabilizing, rehabilitating,
interpreting and exhibiting
buildings and artifacts; oversee
and encourage profitable
commercial enterprises while
creating and maintaining
credible relationships with all
stakeholders and partners to
protect historic character for
the benefit and enjoyment of
generations of Montanans and
guests.**

On April 23, 1997, the Montana legislature passed House Bills 5 and 14 authorizing the purchase of the Bovey Restoration properties in Virginia City and Nevada City for \$6.5 million (\$5 for the artifacts and \$1.5 million for the buildings and land). The purchase was accomplished on May 16, 1997, and as a result the state became the owner of what may be the most complicated business in the entire state of Montana. Another \$2.9 million was allotted to start the project. Thus, the state now owns about half the historic structures in Virginia City (one-quarter or fewer of all the buildings in the town) and all of the historic community of Nevada City, plus buildings moved in or constructed at both sites by Charlie and Sue Bovey.

The Legislature also created the Montana Heritage Commission to manage these properties and, possibly, other historic sites within Montana. The Commission's mandates are to protect the buildings and the artifacts and to make the sites

economically self-sufficient. The governor and the legislature appointed commissioners, and there is some ex-officio representation from state agencies. Operations are run by executive director Jeff Tiberi. The Montana Historical Society has been closely involved

with developing preservation and curatorial policies. Currently, the Virginia City and Nevada City properties are the only ones managed by the Commission.

The Montana Historical Society now owns the great majority of the buildings, land, and artifacts in Virginia City and Nevada City that were formerly owned by Bovey Restorations. Its role includes acting as an advocate for these resources to the Commission, the historical society Trustees and Foundation, the public, and the state legislature. By law, regulation, and intent, the Society is responsible for ensuring that the treatment of all historic buildings meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation, that treatment of all artifacts meets treatment and curation standards established by the American Association of Museums, and that interpretation is conducted according to standards established by the National Association for Interpretation. The Commission recently agreed to pay the Montana Historical Society 3 percent overhead for their services.

The Montana Historical Society owns a total of 160 acres in 42 unconnected parcels. Besides lots in the town of Virginia City, the state owns approximately ten acres in the Nevada City townsite and approximately ninety acres of mining claims between the two sites. The historical society also owns most of the artifacts acquired from Bovey Restorations, although artifacts acquired after 1997 are owned by the Commission.

The properties that belonged to the Historic Landmark Society of Montana, notably the trains and the contract for locomotive No. 12, were donated by the Landmark Society to the Montana Historical Society Foundation in 1997, which then donated them to the Montana Historical Society. When the state purchased the Bovey Restoration properties, included with the purchase was a contract already in place with the Escanaba Railroad to rebuild the 1910 Baldwin steam locomotive and rebuild the track in exchange for three Soo Line railroad cars, a chapel car, and a Shay locomotive.

The Montana Heritage Commission manages the state-owned assets in Virginia City and Nevada City. Day-to-day and long-term decisions (except for deaccessioning Montana Historical Society property) rest with the Commission. Its management role includes establishing policies, procedures, and parameters to protect the assets while at the same time operating the facilities in a manner that leads to economic self-sufficiency.

The key components of the Commission's mission were originally the twin goals of preserving the historic resources it manages and becoming self-sustaining financially. Since then, the goal of providing interpretation to visitors has been added to the mix. It is recognized that through interpretation, Virginia City and Nevada City can offer the public valuable insights into the local and regional consequences of the 1860s gold rushes.

Over the four years since it was established, the Commission has refined its mission, philosophy, and vision. The Commission hopes to tell the story of "the nation's best-preserved example of gold rush era architecture and history" and to reflect the changes and continuum of Montana's heritage. The Commission wants to ensure that its programs and activities prevent irrevocable loss of resources, enable visitors to

understand their experiences in Virginia City and Nevada City in a coherent, explainable way, and integrate public interest with professional ethics and standards.

Because of its multi-faceted mission, many decisions the Commission makes have to be compromises, balancing the interests of protecting cultural resources, providing high-

quality interpretation, forming partnerships within and outside the community, and obtaining adequate long-term funding.

When acquired by the state, most of Virginia City and Nevada City's historic buildings and artifacts were at serious risk. The state of Montana acquired these historic resources to ensure their preservation into an indefinite future for educational and economic benefit. The Commission, together with partners such as the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has already taken critical steps to ensure professional care of these historic resources and is now building on this foundation.

The Commission can point to "brick and mortar" work as tangible accomplishments. The National Park Service provided a \$1 million grant for historic preservation work in Virginia City in 2000. Work has begun on the highest-priority stabilization needs for buildings in both communities, based on a professional analysis of those needs. As of October 2000, the Commission had overseen repair work on 78 of the buildings it manages, and a number of sewer and water lines have been repaired. A \$1.1 million curatorial center has been built, and the process of inventorying and accessioning artifacts has begun.

Since 1997, the Commission has administered Virginia City and Nevada City as public attractions for visitors, primarily following the practices already established by Bovey Restorations. Two interpretive brochures keyed to historic buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City have been printed and distributed. A visitor center has been established in the Virginia City railroad depot, and a new entrance gate has been built at Nevada City.

Guiding Principles of Montana Heritage Commission

As the Commission, we believe:

- 1. That by working with each other, with organizations who share our mission, and with membership and "friends" groups, we can better preserve important parts of Montana's past.**
- 2. That through education and interpretation, visitors can learn the value of heritage preservation.**
- 3. That a hands-on experience brings the past alive.**
- 4. That a small town atmosphere and small town values should guide commercial development.**
- 5. That heritage resources and private enterprises complement each other.**
- 6. That Virginia City should continue to be real.**
- 7. That sustainable funding is critical to the success of the Commission's mission.**

-- Commission Strategic Thinking Notes, July 2000

An annotated bibliography of all known documents about Alder Gulch, a summary of historical themes, a visitor survey, and a marketing study have been completed by consultants. A restored steam locomotive has been obtained, and this and a gasoline-powered engine carry visitors on a regular schedule between Virginia City and Nevada City during the summer season. The Commission oversees twenty concessions, including hotels in Virginia City and Nevada City, restaurants, and two theaters, and operates seven businesses. A thirteen-minute orientation video has been produced.

The Commission has hired an executive director, curators of history and of collections, a historic preservation specialist and preservation team, maintenance workers, gatekeepers, train operators, visitor center staff, and other seasonal or specialized staff, some on an as-needed basis. In 1999, there were only three full-time-equivalent employees; by the fall of 2000, this had grown to approximately twelve. Since hiring the executive director, the Commission has prepared a planning document or study every three months. A year-round office has been established in Virginia City.

To summarize, the Commission manages 248 buildings, several dozen businesses, coordinates with 23 interest groups, and is a partner with the town of Virginia City, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, and the Virginia City Chamber of Commerce.

Finding a long-term source of reliable funding remains a very important goal for the Commission. Since 1997, the project has received an additional \$7.3 million from sixteen sources. The earned revenue has more than doubled over the past four years, reaching \$246,000 in 2000. But, there remains an estimated need for over \$22 million for capital projects alone.

**Commission Operations Revenue Mix,
2000 (total \$246,112):**

Nevada City gate: 20 percent
Train: 21 percent
Housing (rentals): 6 percent
Concessions: 44 percent
Music Hall: 2 percent
Virginia City depot gift store: 5 percent
Other: 4 percent

The Commission's basic operations require more than \$600,000 per year at the current level of operations. This money comes from its own operations revenue, legislative funds, and bed tax monies. Bed-tax funds of a total of \$1.2 million over fiscal years 1998-2001 have been committed for operations, but this funding source ends in 2001. All but the operations revenues are soon coming to an end; there is currently no dedicated revenue stream available to the

Commission. In July 2000, the Commission identified the objective of increasing operational profits at least 10 percent per year to help meet its goal of fiscal integrity.

Several bills to provide additional funding for Commission management of Virginia City and Nevada City may be introduced to the Montana legislature and to the U.S. Congress during the 2001 session. If successful, such appropriations would greatly increase the ability of the Commission to properly care for the resources it manages and to interpret them for the public.

Strengths and Challenges Facing the Commission

The Commission benefits from the following strengths of the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City:

- Unusually high percentage of historic buildings still exist
- Much historic fabric remains
- Historic setting still has much integrity
- Artifact collection is very large, some with local associations
- Virginia City has good name recognition within Montana
- Locomotive No. 12 has popular appeal
- The Commission has good will among most of the local residents and businesses
- Staff and volunteers are highly committed to the project
- The sites have “curbside appeal” (most visitors driving through do stop)

The Commission is challenged by the following constraints:

- Funding uncertainties
- Deteriorating resources
- Majority of artifacts dating from a later period than the peak of the gold rush
- Relatively remote location
- Low population base (for visitors and for volunteers)
- Poor handicap accessibility
- Parking issues along lower Wallace Street
- Lack of certain desirable visitor facilities
- Short season; only curatorial center and office buildings are open in winter; others do not have modern winterization
- Lack of staff trained in certain specialties
- Highway running through both townsites
- Amount of time required to manage small concession contracts
- Possibility of becoming too bureaucratic, losing the sense of authenticity
- Possibility of becoming stuck in a “we’ve always done it that way” mentality

Visitor Profile

The Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana conducted a study of visitors to Virginia City and Nevada City between July and September 1999, using traffic counters, traffic intercepts, and a booklet survey. Visitors are of all ages, group size, and educational background. Major findings of the survey, as relevant to this report, are as follows:

- 44 percent of potential visitors spent less than an hour in the two communities.
- Most visitors who stopped spent one to four hours in Virginia City and Nevada City.

- About 25 percent of visitors spent a night in Virginia City or Nevada City.
- 35 percent of the visitors were from Montana, 60 percent from another state, 2 percent from Canada, and 4 percent from other foreign countries.
- 19 percent of the visitor groups had children.
- About one-quarter of the trips were planned the day of the visit.
- Repeat visitors accounted for 10 percent and first-time visitors for 13 percent of total traffic through the two communities.
- Most visitors came in order to view historic structures, learn Montana history, "do exciting things," or be with friends or family.
- Most visitors spent the night in Bozeman, Ennis, West Yellowstone, or Yellowstone National Park prior to visiting Virginia City and Nevada City.
- Some 88 percent of the potential visitors driving through Virginia City during the summer season do stop.

Increasing the length of stay in Virginia City and Nevada City is a desirable goal. For some visitors with a fixed itinerary, this may not be possible. For those with more flexible or spontaneous travel plans, however, providing increased opportunities could change the use pattern from treating Virginia City as a brief stop on a circuit to a destination.

Comparable Sites

Virginia City and Nevada City, Montana, are not the only historic townsites in western North America that are being preserved and interpreted to the public. Quite a few others, in fact, also tell various aspects of the story of community development associated with mining. The following table provides some comparison between a number of historic sites that are at least somewhat similar in management goals and resources to the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City.

Some of the figures, such as numbers of artifacts, may not be counted identically at all sites. The figure for concessions does not include friends groups or cooperating associations. The number of full-time-equivalent employees (FTEs) does not include concession employees, which is a significant number at some of the sites.

Site name	Location	Year est'd	# buildings	# artifacts	# concessions	# FTEs	# visitors
Virginia City and Nevada City	Virginia City, Montana	1945, 1959	248	ca. 300,000	20	12	70,000
Bannack State Park	Bannack, Montana	1954	>70	100	0	4.5	30,000
Barkerville Heritage Town	Barkerville, British Columbia	1958	133 (101 original)	>100,000	22	21	100,000
Bodie State Historic Park	Bridgeport, California	1962	180	10,000*	0	12	200,000
Columbia State Historic Park	Columbia, California	1945	160	20,000	28	11	460,000
Fort Steele Heritage Town	Cranbrook, Bri. Col.	1961	64	250,000	12	50.75	120,000
Garnet Ghost Town	Garnet, Montana	1970	25	325	0	3	25,000
Grant-Kohrs Ranch NHS	Deerlodge, Montana	1972	89 (3 non-historic)	27,000	0	21	25,000
Klondike Gold Rush NHP	Skagway, Alaska	1976	15 (+ 2 trails)	270,000 **	0***	ca. 30	748,000 (April-Sept.)
Klondike National Historic Sites	Dawson, Yukon Terr.	1967	32	256,000	2	ca. 26	39,000
South Pass City	South Pass City, Wyo.	1966	26	30,000	0	---	30,000
World Museum of Mining	Butte, Montana	1963	37 (2 original)	100,000	0	3.9	21,000

* Catalogued ** Counting nails *** Has 40 incidental business permits for day activities

TREATMENT OF BUILDINGS AND SITES

General

Background: The Commission manages 248 buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City. Many were constructed for temporary use only; a few were designed to last many years. Wood decay, insects, rodents, loose chinking, sinking foundations, leaking roofs, sagging floors, and structural problems are taking their toll. Almost none of the buildings in Virginia City look exactly like they did originally because of remodeling, additions, changed building uses, replaced siding and roofs, new porches, and other modifications over time. The Commission has already done repair work on some seventy-eight buildings.

Over the years, the words "arrested decay" have been used to describe the preservation of buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City. The meaning of this term is unclear. Deterioration has not been arrested; historic fabric is being replaced all the time. The term arrested decay will not be used in this report. Instead, the terms used in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards – preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction - will be employed. These professional standards prevent irrevocable loss of resources that might be of great importance to future generations.

The priorities for preservation work in Virginia City and Nevada City are many, and they can change overnight. Water is the main concern; leaking roofs, windows, and foundations must be addressed first. The current preservation efforts must accelerate. Although a formal analysis of all the maintenance and preservation needs has not been done, it is clear to even the casual observer that the rate of preservation work does not yet equal the rate of deterioration.

In January 2000, the National Park Service granted the Commission \$1 million for preservation work in Virginia City. Similar work in Nevada City is not funded under this agreement. The funding covers both maintenance projects and major projects. A Preservation Specialist was hired to coordinate the preservation work for three years. The Commission estimates that the grant funds will be spent before all the buildings on the most-endangered list have been worked on.

A Programmatic Agreement was prepared and signed that provides stipulations that satisfy the National Park Service's responsibilities under 36 CFR 800 implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for all undertakings implemented under the 2000 grant. Accordingly, the Commission established a Historic Building Preservation Team to repair and maintain the historic buildings in Virginia City and agreed to go through standard Section 106 review for any work that does not qualify for review under the Programmatic Agreement. A detailed list of work that does and does not require review was prepared and agreed upon. Under the terms of the grant, potential effects to archaeological properties must be considered and treated. The agreement also

includes provisions for discoveries, emergencies, reporting and annual review, and dispute resolution.

Virginia City participates in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. It has a local preservation officer and commission that can provide technical assistance in historic preservation. The CLG program directs local governments to engage in comprehensive preservation planning. It encourages partnerships among agency representatives, property owners, and local preservation professionals. The local government is eligible for funding through grants that the Montana State Historic Preservation Office sets aside to fund local programs.

Guiding Principles: Preservation options for historic towns range from total restoration of a town to its appearance at a particular moment in history (including reconstructing missing buildings), to stabilization and preservation of a town at a picturesque moment in its decline. The Commission should continue to take an approach between these two extremes.

The Commission's goal for Virginia City and Nevada City's buildings is to apply consistent, high-quality, well-documented treatment to the buildings, preserving the historic fabric as much as possible. Because of their visual impact, size, and number, the buildings and their setting play a critical role in the visitor experience. All buildings, including outhouses, barns, and other outbuildings, have stories to tell about the lives of people in the communities. The buildings managed by the state will not be allowed to continue to deteriorate. Although such sites can inspire the imagination, such deterioration would go counter to the state's mandate; deteriorating buildings will not survive for the next generations to enjoy.

The buildings in both Virginia City and Nevada City will be preserved in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, with an emphasis on the treatment methods of preservation and rehabilitation rather than restoration or reconstruction.

The buildings owned by the state are not the only part of the setting that needs to be considered. The two townsites and the surrounding landscape should be seen as an interrelated whole that includes small elements such as fences, boardwalks, and archaeological sites and broad views. The historic setting – terrain, vegetation, wildlife, and weather – is also critical to the historic scene and the overall impression of "reality." Experienced as a whole, they allow visitors to relate easily to the past.

The buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City have a variety of uses and cannot all be treated equally. Guidelines for determining the appropriate treatment method for the buildings at the two sites are provided below. Over time, the treatment selected for a particular building may need to change. For example, the Commission may decide to convert a building used for a furnished building display to a concession that requires the construction of a small addition, in which case the treatment method would switch from preservation to rehabilitation. Or, it may be decided to restore a particular building to its

appearance during a particular year, in which case the treatment method would change to restoration.

In general, the Commission should select the treatment method that alters the building the least, because once historic fabric is lost, it is gone forever. Thus, the treatments are preferred in this order: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. Retain as much of the original historic fabric and craftsmanship as possible, from the smallest details of individual structures to the overall combination of all the buildings and the surrounding landscape. It is critical for visitors to understand that they are seeing and touching materials that have survived from the past. No one use category of building should be preferred over another (such as buildings with displays vs. concessions), since uses may change over time.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties (1995) are federal guidelines designed to provide philosophical consistency to preservation work. They cover four treatments: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction. These approaches to treatment are summarized below. Every building, structure, site, or object in Virginia City and Nevada City that is managed by the Commission will be treated according to one of these standards.

Standards for Preservation: Preservation generally focuses on the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than on extensive replacement and new construction. The historic character of the property is retained and preserved. Replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships

that characterize a property will be avoided. Work will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved. New materials will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture. Use the gentlest means of chemical or physical treatments available. Protect and preserve in place archaeological resources; otherwise, undertake mitigation measures. Protection, stabilization, and maintenance work are in this category, as are limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical systems. Depiction of a particular time period is not appropriate for this treatment.

Factors to be considered when selecting treatment methods (preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, or reconstruction) for a particular building:

- Visitor and employee safety
- Present condition and appearance (includes integrity)
- Use (concession, display, storage, etc.)
- Historical and architectural significance
- Interpretive and educational potential (this may change as additional research is completed and an Interpretive Plan is prepared)
- Location (visibility)
- Impacts on archaeological sites
- Other management considerations such as funding, political support

Most buildings in both Virginia City and Nevada City will fall into this category, which is the least destructive of historic fabric. Select this treatment unless it is necessary to choose one of the other methods for any reason (see list of criteria in sidebar). This method may be selected for some buildings that have been adapted for new uses, such as storage or interpretive work areas.

Examples: LaBeau Jewelry Store, most outbuildings, Elkhorn Barber Shop

Standards for Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation makes possible a compatible use of a property through repair, alterations, and additions, while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. Changes that create a false sense of historical development will not be undertaken. Retain and preserve changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right. When replacement rather than repair is necessary, match the old in design, color, texture, and – where possible – materials. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction does not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property and will be done so that if it is removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment are unimpaired. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing.

Select this treatment for buildings that require extensive repair and replacement or have been adapted for a new use that requires significant remodeling and other alterations.

Buildings that are reconstructions or new constructions should be treated under the Standards for Rehabilitation. These fall into two categories: 1) buildings constructed by the Boveys between the 1940s and 1978 and 2) buildings constructed later, primarily by the Commission, such as the Nevada City engine house and the McFarland Curatorial Center. Even buildings that are modern to today's visitors, such as the curatorial center, may acquire historical significance fifty years from now through their association with the state's efforts to manage the sites. This treatment method does not prohibit their being remodeled to accommodate new uses and needs.

Examples: Opera House, visitor center, Dance & Stuart Store, Fairweather Inn, Nevada City engine house

Standards for Restoration: Restoration accurately depicts the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by removing features from other periods in its history and reconstructing missing features from the restoration period. The property is used as it was historically or is given a new use that reflects the property's restoration period. All work focuses on the restoration period. Do not add conjectural features or features from other properties or create a false sense of history by combining features that never existed together historically. Use when a property's design, architectural, or historical significance during a particular period of time outweighs the

potential loss of extant materials, features, spaces, and finishes that characterize other historical periods; when there is substantial physical and documentary evidence for the work, and when contemporary alterations and additions are not planned.

Restoration of a building to a particular period of time is almost never appropriate in Virginia City. The layers of history, as displayed in the buildings that have been modified over time, are part of the story that the site tells so well. Time, money, and energy should be focused on preserving what is standing, with all its layers, rather than the very expensive undertaking of restoring one building to its appearance at a particular moment in time.

The primary possible exceptions are the two buildings with associations to the territorial government, Content's Corner and Stonewall Hall (the state is the caretaker of the latter, but it is managed by the state). The original facades of both these buildings were completely redone in the 1890s. Content's Corner was modernized in 1898 with brick veneer and plate-glass windows replacing the original stone and stucco front with Gothic-arched windows, and the porch under the balcony on the east side was enclosed in the 1920s. The original stone front of Stonewall Hall was removed and replaced with a plate-glass storefront in the 1890s, and in 1914 a garage door was installed.

Some Commission staff and commissioners would like to see these two buildings restored to their appearance during the territorial capital period (1865-75). Until these buildings are restored to a particular period, if ever, interpretation should be designed to help people envision the past and understand how these buildings visually chronicle changes in architectural tastes.

Restoration of a building to a particular period of time may be considered in Nevada City, but only if it is critical to the interpretive program and if sufficient documentation is available.

If a historic building in Virginia City is slated for use as a long-term visitor center, this building might be restored to a particular period as part of that project. In general, the decision to restore a building should not be made lightly, and it is dependent on sufficient documentation to guide the restoration work.

Examples: Content's Corner (possibly), building converted to a visitor center (possibly)

Standards for Reconstruction: Reconstruction depicts the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object by new construction for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location. Documentary and physical evidence to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture is necessary. Reconstruction must be essential to the public understand of the property. The property should be clearly identified as a contemporary recreation. Use reconstruction when no other property with the same associative value has survived.

Reconstruction of any building, structure, site, or object in Virginia City is discouraged. It should only be undertaken for very compelling reasons, such as an important story that cannot be told in any other way or when a building is destroyed by a natural disaster such as earthquake or fire. Even in that case, the possibility of interpreting the remains of the building should be considered before adopting reconstruction as the treatment method. If appropriate and possible, the building's appearance from the 1863-75 period should be selected for reconstruction.

Rather than reconstruction, the Commission should focus on interpreting the remains of buildings or long-gone buildings by sparking visitors' imaginations. The scale model in the visitor center will help in this respect. Although it might be helpful for the interpretive program to reconstruct particular well-documented buildings in key locations, such as South Jackson Street, this will of necessity remain a low priority because so much needs to be done to protect the real, standing buildings. Filling vacant lots with close reconstructions of historic buildings on those locations is an intriguing possibility but one that is probably not going to be financially viable for many years to come. But, it is possible to interpret vacant lots with outdoor exhibits (this is, of course, much preferable to converting vacant lots to parking areas).

Nevada City is a town made up of original, moved-in, and reconstructed buildings, and the Commission has already added one new building to the site, the engine house. The intent in Nevada City is to interpret the Boveys' efforts to preserve a "generic" Montana town. Reconstruction of a building originally located in Nevada City or elsewhere in Montana is possible if 1) no actual building similar to the one proposed to be reconstructed is available, and 2) it is considered critical for the interpretive program or other management needs. This essentially matches the Boveys' practice; for example, the Nevada City depot was built new in 1964 to Great Northern standard plans. No buildings should be moved in to the "Bovey" portion of the townsite. This will help preserve the integrity of the historic district that will be eligible for listing on the National Register by 2009.

Reconstruction of a specific feature of a building may be undertaken in Virginia City and Nevada City. For example, an original structural member that poses a safety hazard may be reconstructed. Conjecture must be kept to a minimum, however. Moving in and attaching historic features from other buildings, as the Boveys did, for example, in moving a porch from an Anaconda residence to the Smith and Boyd Livery Stable, is not acceptable.

Examples: garage for fire engines, wagon storage/exhibit building, Mechanical Bakery (the original materials are stored in Nevada City), storage buildings for flammable materials, schoolhouse for interpretive program, new visitor center (possibly)

In January 2000, the National Park Service, Commission, Montana Historical Society, and the Building Preservation Planning Team agreed on the following guidelines for the work in Virginia City under the preservation grant:

- Preservation will be multi-dimensional.
- Buildings will be preserved to reflect their unique layers of history and original materials.
- Building preservation decisions will be integrated with the site interpretive plan
- Selected buildings may be used for business purposes.
- Buildings with authentic interiors and associated artifacts will be preserved as “time capsules.”
- Existing historic building interiors and exteriors will be preserved.
- Building preservation priorities will be determined by historic significance, management considerations, and structural need.
- Project work will be documented and records of all work kept.
- A preservation maintenance plan will be developed and implemented; maintenance activities will abide by these principles.
- Building codes will be part of the planning process.
- Impacts to the artifact collection and archaeological resources will be taken into account as part of all building preservation projects.
- Buildings and artifacts will help tell the story of the Bovey legacy.
- Buildings reconstructed by Charles Bovey will be recognized as significant contributors to the historic scene and will be recognized as historic structures in their own right.
- Projects will meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.
- Because of their significance to Montana’s territorial history, Content’s Corner and Stonewall Hall may be restored to the era of 1864-75, when Virginia City was territorial capital of Montana. Such period restorations will be undertaken only if there is sufficient documentation to allow for an accurate restoration.

The Commission should involve the local community in selecting the priorities for preservation and maintenance work.

Recommendations:

- Consult with the State Historic Preservation Office to determine whether Nevada City might be eligible as a historic district before 2009, when most of the buildings will have been on-site for at least fifty years. If so, prepare a National Register form. Besides recognizing the significance of the Boveys’ work in Nevada City, the nomination might open up more funding sources for continued preservation work in Nevada City, including the possibility of using National Park Service funding for preservation work there. Until then, protect the resources for the future by making sure that all work falls within the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards.
- Prepare a detailed inventory of Nevada City’s buildings, similar to the one done by Dames & Moore for Virginia City. It should include information on previous and present locations, physical description, history of building, and previous

owners. This could be combined with the preparation of a National Register nomination for the site.

Options to Consider:

- Many historic buildings within Virginia City that are not owned by the state are critical to the overall historic ambiance. Seek funding for a revolving fund that would provide loans for preservation work to private property owners or other entities in town such as the Virginia City Preservation Alliance. Technical assistance might be provided by the National Park Service or the Montana State Historic Preservation Office.

Preservation and Maintenance Projects

Background: The Commission has determined that four buildings in Virginia City are the priority for major preservation work in 2000 and 2001. The selection of buildings was based on structural condition (some, like the Kiskadden Stone Block, are in danger of collapsing), historical significance, and location (highly visible locations were preferred). The four major projects are the Kiskadden Stone Block, Content's Corner, Gilbert House, and Methodist Church. All but the Kiskadden will be contracted out. These projects are not exempt under the Programmatic Agreement. They therefore require review by the State Historic Preservation Office and a plan for considering effects to archaeological resources if ground disturbance is possible.

For these major preservation projects, the historical architect under contract on an as-needed basis with the Commission will prepare Historic Structure Reports and construction drawings before the work begins. Historic Structure Reports provide the historical, archaeological, and architectural information necessary for carrying out the appropriate level of treatment of a historic structure and its setting. Or, the Commission might hire seasonal master's students in a historical architecture program on a seasonal basis to prepare Historic Structure Reports under the supervision of the preservation specialist and historical architect.

The major projects that are subject to review by the National Park Service must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and to the Commission's Guiding Principles. After Park Service review, the project then goes through review by the State Historic Preservation Office. If it is determined to have adverse effects, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation may be consulted.

Preservation maintenance projects are small projects (defined as costing less than \$100,000) that affect the structural stability of a building. These include work such as window repair, oiling wood buildings, boardwalk repairs, removing brush, foundation work, painting, roofing, repairing floors, interior work, chinking and daubing, siding repairs, log replacement straightening doors, painting, boarding up windows, pointing masonry, rewiring, improving drainage, and like-kind replacement of fabric. Preservation maintenance projects do not require a Historic Structure Report. In Virginia

City, this work generally falls under the Programmatic Agreement if it does not alter the historic fabric or if it involves repair or replacement of building materials and finishes with in-kind materials and colors.

After Charlie Bovey died in 1978, only minimal maintenance work on the buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City was performed. In the early 1990s, the National Trust and the National Park Service brought U.S. Forest Service restoration specialists to Virginia City. In 1993 and 1994, they put temporary roofing on five buildings and applied protective linseed oil to some of the dried-out wooden structures. When the state bought the properties, it put some seventy roofs on buildings the first season. By 1999, the state had also repaired porches, replaced rotting logs, reinforced purlins, worked on foundations, repointed the stone façade of the Opera House, repaired rafters, painted, repaired sewer and water lines, painted, and completed general repairs.

In 2000, the Commission hired a three-person preservation crew that works eight months a year. This crew works in both Virginia City and Nevada City. The preservation maintenance projects for 2000 and 20001 were determined by the Commission based on structural condition, historical significance, and location. These are the Greenfront (completed), Sauerbier and Prash blacksmith shops, Cabbage Patch buildings, McGovern Barn, and McGovern Shed in Virginia City, and the Ives Jail, Finney House, and X. Biedler Cabin in Nevada City. The projects in Nevada City do not qualify for funding under the National Park Service grant.

No written plan outlines the on-going maintenance work that needs to be done. Staff selects priorities for work and also responds to daily and weekly situations that require immediate action. Maintenance projects include grounds maintenance, snow removal, trash pick-up, protecting buildings from moisture, sun, and humidity, and cleaning display windows (this is no small task; there are almost 12,000 window panes on state-owned buildings). Routine maintenance includes maintenance activities that occur on a seasonal basis during a given year. Cyclical maintenance are activities that occur less frequently than once a year.

The priorities for maintenance work, as already in place, are sensible and work well. Safety issues, such as rotting boardwalks, are the highest priority; the Commission is responsible for almost 4,000 feet of boardwalk in the two communities. Keeping the buildings used by concessionaires in working order, including the water systems, coolers, and electrical systems, is critical to success of the operation. And, of course, emergencies and unforeseen events will always shift the priorities, such as in 2000 when an automobile damaged a corner of the Greenfront building. The Commission's maintenance crew will likely continue to operate in a world of constantly changing priorities for some time.

A seasonal staffperson who has a private applicator's license leads the noxious weed-control efforts. Some of the state-owned land has to be sprayed by helicopter. This effort ties in with the goals of maintaining the cultural landscape.

It is likely that several buildings that the state owns contain asbestos-containing materials, lead-based paints, motor oil, or battery acid. Railroad ties treated with creosote have been removed and transported off-site to Dillon or have been stacked away from water. Some artifacts in the two townsites qualify as toxins, such as "real food" displays and cosmetics.

The Commission office is located year-round in the former Bovey Restorations office, a non-historic building behind the Boots and Shoes building on the south side of lower Wallace Street. It is already too small to meet existing needs. The garage at the Ford Bovey House and a nearby barn are currently being used as a preservation workshop and storage space. Nevada City has a maintenance shop.

Guiding Principles: The basic guidelines for preservation maintenance work in Virginia City and Nevada City match those of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation. Match existing materials; make no "statements"; all work should be reversible; all work should be sympathetic; replicate original craftsmanship (do not overcraft). The Commission should correlate the decision on the appropriate level of treatment for major preservation projects with the interpretive and concession plans, as appropriate. If a building poses an immediate threat to the safety of staff or visitors, the first priority is to end the threat as soon as possible.

In general, new materials should replicate existing materials unless they are invisible to the visitor (below-ground foundations or hardware in hidden locations, for example). For example, daubing should replicate the hardness, color, consistency, and components of the original. Hand-hewn logs that are replaced should be of matching species, and an effort should be made to duplicate ax marks to replicate the original craftsmanship. On-the-spot decisions for treatment of a building should not be made. Instead, staff should refer to the Preservation Specialist and to the guidelines provided by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. All modifications, repairs, or replacement of materials and features should protect research and interpretive values. All replacement materials, whether new or old, should be dated with a woodburning set or branding iron, or by etching in the corner of each piece of non-original glass.

The Commission's preservation and maintenance crews should strive to retain interior finishes as much as possible, including wall and ceiling finishes. Historic Structure Reports for major preservation work should identify all finishes, paints, wallpapers, hardware, and other interior features. These should include identifying and distinguishing the work of the Boveys (such as installing unused historic wallpaper) from pre-Bovey work. Some of this wallpaper is now in terrible condition. It is not just sagging slightly, as might be historically accurate; it is ripped and water-stained and hanging off the walls and ceilings in strips.

The current preference, based on Bovey practices, is to use old, weathered, in-kind materials whenever possible to avoid "glaring improvements." This practice allows replacement materials to blend in with original materials and also provides certain types of materials that are no longer available new, such as straight-grained clear siding. There

are three disadvantages to this approach, however. The first is that old materials often come from another old building, which – even if the building was going to be torn down anyway - conveys a negative message to the public. Second, this practice goes against the Secretary of the Interior's Standards requiring that new work be distinguishable from the original. Third, it takes quite a bit of time to identify materials that can be used for a particular job.

Curatorial staff should be involved in the early stages of planning preservation projects and as the work progresses so they can arrange for the moving and protection of the artifacts. Any building that contains artifacts, either on display or in storage, requires up-front planning to protect the artifacts during preservation work.

Life safety issues and code deficiencies such as those relating to seismic and electric codes, load-bearing capacities, and building egress must be addressed in certain buildings in both Virginia City and Nevada City before the public can be allowed access. Some buildings have such small spaces that only very small groups can be allowed inside. These considerations are a factor in determining which buildings to open for guided tours or use by concessionaires.

Modern utilities in Nevada City should be hidden from public view to maintain the historic ambiance. These include electricity, heat sources, propane, water, telephone, sewerage, fire protection, and solid waste disposal.

Dogs (except seeing eye dogs) should not be allowed inside any state-owned properties in Virginia City or Nevada City.

The Commission office should remain in a location close to or within the historic core district of Virginia City for the time being, if possible. Any new construction for administrative purposes, however, should not be within the historic core.

Recommendations:

- Aim to protect all 248 state-owned buildings from water damage by 2005.
- Hire additional maintenance and preservation crew employees; retain or hire new preservation specialist and preservation crew when National Park Service grant funding ends.
- Seek additional funding from National Park Service and other sources for preservation work before current grant expires.
- Use up existing stockpiles of old materials and begin artificially aging materials by leaving them outside. Discourage the offering of old buildings to the Commission for use of materials.

- Begin whitewashing many of the state-owned buildings. This was often done historically; the lime in the whitewash helps preserve wood, and it weathers quickly. Continue spraying or brushing linseed oil on many of the buildings (this also helps preserve them).
- Chink or daub log buildings and repair frame structures that contain artifacts as needed, possibly using impervious membranes. This will help provide a more controlled environment for the artifacts.
- Document and replace wallpaper that is in very bad condition in buildings the public sees. Damaged wallpaper may be replaced with replica wallpaper or with wallpaper appropriate to the period being interpreted. In buildings used for storage or other non-public uses, the wallpaper may be left in place. Any time historic wallpaper, paint, or flooring is removed, retain samples of the repeat pattern in the Commission permanent records in the file for the individual building. Most of these were put in by the Boveys; if some interiors are redesigned to their original appearance, these interior features will have to be changed.
- Prepare and implement a Preservation Maintenance Plan that includes discussion of the treatment methods, work priorities, and supplies and materials and provides detailed guidelines for the actual work. The National Park Service has a computerized system that handles cyclical maintenance planning in park units. Look into this, although it may not be worth establishing for the Commission.
- Establish an annual building inspection program using standardized forms. This does not need to be overly complicated and time-consuming; its purpose would be to identify problems at an early stage and incorporate them into the subsequent maintenance and preservation planning. The checklist for each building might include such items as landscaping, exterior and interior features, fire and life safety considerations, handicapped accessibility, and utilities.
- Inventory all buildings to determine which could be opened for guided tours.
- Do a hazardous materials survey that includes the collecting and analysis of samples. Evaluate abatement strategies and costs against historic preservation requirements. Contain hazardous materials either on-site or transport them off-site to a licensed treatment, storage, and disposal facility. Dispose of small units of hazardous materials, such as cleaners, kerosene, old foodstuffs, and cosmetics, as hazardous household waste.
- Block the windows of buildings that are used for storage or work spaces in Nevada City and in the historic core of Virginia City with opaque shades or non-transparent glass so that visitors cannot look inside and see modern workshops, artifacts that are not meant for display, or other views that detract from the visitor experience.

Options to Consider:

- Some of the moved-in buildings, such as the Virginia City depot, and newly constructed buildings such as the Nevada City engine house and some of the concessions, are painted. Other frame buildings and trim may be painted as well, as historically appropriate. These decisions should be made on a consistent basis; it is currently not clear to the visitor why some frame buildings are painted and some are not.

Structural and Wildland Fire Protection

Background: The most significant historic buildings in both communities are mostly wood frame or log construction. They are old, very dry, and are susceptible to fire. Because they are close to one another, the probability of rapid fire spread is relatively high. Wildland fire could be a hazard to some buildings, particularly at Nevada City.

Protection of the buildings owned by the state is provided by the Virginia City volunteer fire department (VFD). The twenty-member organization has a large tanker (owned by the Commission), a large pumper, and a small four-wheel drive truck. Their response time to a fire in Virginia City is about five minutes. Virginia City has an excellent supply of water delivered through city fire hydrants. Currently only a few of the state-owned buildings have sprinkler systems, such as the Wells Fargo Coffee House and the McFarland Curatorial Center. All hotel rooms and the curatorial center have smoke detectors, but only those in the curatorial center are connected to a central system. Hand-held fire extinguishers are located throughout the state properties.

Nevada City does not have any organized fire protection except that provided voluntarily by the Virginia City VFD; the response time there is about nine or ten minutes. Mutual aid resources from other Madison County fire organizations are available, but their response time is much higher. A 1952 Chevrolet fire truck with about 500 gallons of water and two fire trucks owned by the Department of State Lands are housed in Nevada City (no water is stored in these vehicles in the winter, however, because they are stored in the unheated wagon shop).

Nevada City's water supply for fire suppression is a pond west of the depot with a large-capacity pump but no large water mains or fire hydrants. Year-round faucets and about 100 feet of hose are located inside five labeled boxes scattered through Nevada City. The current water supply for Nevada City would not support sprinkler or deluge systems.

The Commission has already taken a number of steps to protect its resources from fire. Wood and other flammable materials have been removed from the grass surrounding Nevada City; dams in two holding ponds were re-established to raise water levels; a pump was purchased to transfer water from the holding ponds to Nevada City; a truck was obtained from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; smoking

regulations and enforcement have been tightened; and staff has been trained to respond to emergencies.

Smoking is already prohibited in Nevada City except for the engine house and the designated smoking area on the hotel porch. In Virginia City, smoking is prohibited in the curatorial center, hotel rooms, and building displays. It is allowed, however, inside some of the restaurants and other concessions. A ban on smoking outside state-owned buildings is difficult to enforce.

In 2000, the consulting firm Fire Logistics prepared an analysis of the fire protection capability of the Virginia City VFD and made fire protection recommendations for the Commission properties in Virginia City and Nevada City. A fire protection plan for the Commission properties in both communities is now being prepared and should be completed by the end of 2000. This will include plans for a water main and fire hydrants in Nevada City connected to the pump there, a perimeter irrigation-type sprinkler system to stop grass fires, deluge sprinklers to protect buildings, heat and smoke detectors, and other aspects of fire detection and protection.

Old, frayed wiring is a concern in some of the buildings. The Commission plans to install new wiring in the Opera House in 2001, and several other electrical updates were recently completed. Before underground electrical wiring projects and water line repair projects can be started, the archaeological survey first has to be completed and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (a Programmatic Agreement for certain types of archaeological work may soon be developed).

Guiding Principles: Early detection of structural fire in Virginia City and Nevada City is critical. Fire protection measures designed to protect the cultural resources of the two sites is a high priority; if the buildings and artifacts burn, the project has failed.

It is very important that both fire detection and fire suppression systems be located wherever artifacts are stored or exhibited and wherever visitors or staff sleep and that they alert the appropriate authorities. The next priorities are buildings occupied by large groups of people.

The Commission staff should continue to adopt maintenance practices that reduce the risk of fire. For example, clear vegetation and debris in at least a two-foot perimeter around all buildings. Keep all storage, exhibit, and staff work spaces clean and well organized. Construct a fire break along the perimeter of the state property line around Nevada City. Mow and water all native vegetation around the buildings. Keep roof gutters and valleys free of debris. Do not stack firewood close to buildings. Enclose crawl spaces. Make sure all wood stoves have spark arrestors, and keep chimneys clean.

Recommendations:

- Implement the fire protection plan as a high priority.

- Do not allow smoking anywhere in Nevada City nor inside any state-owned buildings in Virginia City. Banning smoking inside state-owned buildings also helps protect artifacts from smoke damage.
- Conceal modern fire detection and suppression equipment, unless this compromises public safety. Hoses in Nevada City, for example, could be stored inside horse troughs or barrels, although they probably still should be labeled so that staff AND visitors can recognize them in an emergency.
- Store flammable materials separate from historic buildings and artifacts.

Security Issues

Background: Security is a growing concern in both Virginia City and Nevada City, even though they are relatively remote sites and Nevada City is generally only visited during daylight hours. There were several break-ins to state property in the summer of 2000. There are some 450 locks on Commission properties, and two or three master keys open many of them. The Commission has prepared a plan for re-keying all the locks, since unauthorized people may currently own keys. The Commission is currently preparing a security plan for the properties it manages. The curatorial staff has begun creating a videotape record of all furnished building displays.

Virginia City's buildings are protected to some extent by a neighborhood watch program. Observant residents, visitor good will, and prevention systems such as locks on buildings and physical barriers separating visitors from furnished building displays are all necessary. Detection and alarm systems, however, require electricity, which is not available in all the buildings.

Nevada City's main protection comes from having at least one person living year-round behind the gate. As in Virginia City, most of the buildings do not have electricity, which would be necessary for an alarm system.

Guiding Principles: Curatorial staff should continue transferring artifacts that are highly significant or valuable to the curatorial center so they can be protected and preserved. They should also continue videotaping all displays and also storage areas as a permanent record in case of future break-ins.

Commission staff should remove any visible damage to buildings caused by vandalism soon after it happens. Damage such as graffiti disturbs visitors, gives a poor impression of state management of the site, and may encourage further vandalism.

Recommendations:

- Install detection and alarm systems in critical buildings, particularly those in Virginia City that are kept open until 8 p.m.

- Limit access to artifacts in the curatorial center and on display inside buildings to just a few people. Restrict access to the new building keys. Carefully evaluate adding new locks, since they damage the doors on which they are mounted.

Options to Consider:

- In buildings that are open to guided tours, lock closets and other possible hiding places.

Documentation of Work

Background: The Commission's preservation crew has established files for each of the 248 buildings it manages. At least two building numbering systems exist. Some buildings are known by several different names.

The staff maintain boxes of architectural reference materials by building, as appropriate. This includes samples of wallpaper and interior paint colors.

Guiding Principles: Records documenting the work done to buildings and to landscapes are highly important. The records should be maintained in an organized fashion and protected from fire. Documentation of archaeological investigations are also very important and should be maintained and protected as part of the permanent record. All buildings are to be assigned one number and one name for use by the Commission in all its work.

Staff will continue to maintain boxes of architectural reference material.

Recommendations:

- Number every building that the state manages, and number all work orders accordingly. Assign each building a name, preferably a name that reflects its earliest or most significant historic use. All materials related to each building in any aspect of Commission work should refer to the building by this name.
- Document the existing conditions of buildings and landscape in text and images as soon as possible.
- Document all work done on each building, whether by the preservation crew, maintenance staff, or concessionaires, by written text (including completion reports) and before-and-after photographs. Include copies of historic photographs of the building in the files, for easy reference. Include or reference work done prior to state ownership, such as the 1995 building inventory performed by Dames & Moore, the Historic American Building Survey done for Content's Corner, and appropriate Bovey Restorations records. Protect all building-related files and other records in locking, fireproof file cabinets.

- Track all costs by building (currently the bills paid for work on buildings are kept in separate files from the building files). The documentation of preservation projects can be used in the future to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods that were used.

Constructing or Moving In Buildings, and Removing Existing Buildings

Background: The Virginia City Town Council adopted a set of design guidelines governing new construction, alterations, and additions in 1998. Four districts were defined within the town. These guidelines attempt to ensure that work adheres to the historic residential and commercial architectural styles. They list defining features and appropriate and inappropriate materials and architectural styles. They are geared to size, scale, proportions, placement, style, setbacks, orientation, side lots, and other factors concerning the exterior appearance of the buildings. The Historic Commercial District has the most strict guidelines. New buildings constructed on vacant lots where buildings once stood should be a close reconstruction of the original.

Buildings have been purchased or accepted as donations and moved in to Nevada City from the 1940s through at least 1996. The Commission has already constructed a new building in Nevada City, the engine house, and it leases a new curatorial center in Virginia City. Other new construction may be desirable, such as a wagon shop, maintenance facilities, or a visitor center. In the future, the Commission will undoubtedly be presented with opportunities to purchase or accept through donation buildings and land.

Guiding Principles: The acquisition of a building or of land represents a long-term commitment to its maintenance and protection. Before acquiring any new real estate in the Virginia City or Nevada City area, whether a building or land, the Commission should carefully evaluate its potential to enhance the interpretive program or other management objectives in either Virginia City or Nevada City and the possible consequences if the property does not come under state control. For example, Stonewall Hall is not owned by the state, but it is an important territorial building and is in a prominent location on Wallace Street. If possible, the Commission should try to obtain title to this building. Other Virginia City buildings that the state might eventually wish to obtain are the Rockfellow House (this would be well suited to house tours) or the Buford Barn behind the Wells Fargo Coffee House (this would be a well-located, compatible storage area).

The state should not rule out the possibility of continuing the Bovey tradition of moving historic buildings in to Nevada City. Moving in buildings to Nevada City should not be done lightly, however. Any buildings that are moved in should be put in an area outside of the potential National Register-eligible historic district there that is related to the Bovey management of the site and the history of historic preservation in the American West. As in Virginia City, any acquired property should further interpretive or other management objectives. For example, a barn in Salisbury was recently torn down. This

might have been an appropriate storage building for wagons that currently remain outdoors year-round in Nevada City. Even reconstructions of historic buildings, such as log cabins built for a movie set, might be appropriate to be relocated to Nevada City to serve as a classroom or for housing.

When considering new construction, the Commission should ask whether an existing building could meet the need. If a historic building or its setting would be significantly damaged by the proposed use over time, however, then it is not a suitable use. Questions to ask when considering the purchase or acceptance of a donated building or piece of land:

- 1) What are the up-front and long-term costs?
- 2) Is it relevant to the Virginia City/Nevada City story?
- 3) Does it fill an interpretive void?
- 4) Does it meet a particular management need?
- 5) Does it represent the time period being interpreted, and is it appropriate for the site?
- 6) Is it in good enough condition for long-term preservation with available resources,
- 7) Are there any limiting conditions, such as covenants or hazardous materials?
- 8) If land, is it within the viewshed of Virginia City or Nevada City?
- 9) If a building, is Virginia City or Nevada City the best place for it?

The Commission should retain the option to dispose of donated buildings or real estate at a later date.

Consider removing all or parts of a building only if the building significantly detracts from the visitor experience. An example would be a metal-sided garage that is visible from the street in the historic core district of Virginia City.

Recommendations:

- Prepare guidelines for evaluating proposed new construction or the acquisition of buildings or land.

Options to Consider:

- Purchase property in Virginia City or adjacent to Nevada City and then sell it with covenants to protect the historic values.

Treatment of Historic Setting

Background: The cultural landscape within the viewshed of Virginia City is a significant part of the National Historic Landmark. This includes the cemeteries, the configuration of the land, native and introduced plants, and the historic mining landscape, which is largely undeveloped. So far, there has been minimal modern development of the

viewshed. Revegetation since the most active mining periods has occurred and has obscured some of the features of the mining landscape.

Land adjacent to Virginia City and Nevada City is managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the state, and private landowners. There are approximately 30 patented and an estimated 100 unpatented mining claims in the vicinity of Virginia City.

There is concern about the development of private land within the viewshed, including some that is adjacent to state property. The vast majority of Virginia City residents interviewed in 1992 felt that protection of the surrounding landscape was important. The town is surrounded on three sides by a large ranch that is now on the market; some of this property is within the viewshed. Some modern commercial buildings have been constructed on upper Wallace Street, and newer houses dating mostly from the 1970s and later are on the high hills on the north and south parts of the townsite in areas that were not occupied during the historic period. The Boot Hill area visible from Wallace Street is mostly privately owned and thus has the potential of being developed. Much of the viewshed from on top of Boot Hill is already subdivided and for sale. Much of the hillsides visible to the west of the corridor between Virginia City and Nevada City is owned by the Ford Bovey Estate and may be sold and subdivided. To the east of Nevada City, a large ranch and several others own the ground adjacent to the highway.

The mining landscape along Alder Gulch is a major physical reminder of the mining activities that extracted gold from the creekbed gravels and from lode mines. The different mining systems overlay the landscape in layers, each layer reflecting the technology and level of activity. Evidence of the early 1860s period, when rockers, sluice boxes, and long toms were used, have generally been obliterated by later mining efforts. Remnants of hydraulic mining and associated water systems are more common, as are the dredge ponds and tailings piles from Virginia City downstream to Alder.

The setting of the original townsite of Nevada City has been dramatically changed by the actions of the dredges that overturned land on one side of the highway. Yet to date there has been little modern development on the surrounding lands. A year-round residence and bed-and-breakfast with individual cabins is located just east of Nevada City. A large house is being constructed along the western boundary.

The Commission is currently acquiring a parcel of land from the Bureau of Land Management. This parcel lies along the railroad track and thus is an important piece of property for the state to own.

Virginia City has a Tree Committee, and Commission staff meets with this committee concerning plans for problem trees and replacement trees, although trees on private property are not within the Committee's jurisdiction. The Commission is preparing a draft plan concerning the trees on state-owned property in Virginia City.

Guiding Principles: The Commission should work with the City to instill a preservation ethic in local builders and property owners, particularly those who want to build on

highly visible ridges. When possible, the Commission should acquire land that is critical to its mission. This includes land along the corridor between Virginia City and Nevada City.

The Virginia City Guidelines for Design Review note that the open spaces on the hills to the southeast, west, and north of Virginia City (the viewshed) should be preserved voluntarily. The two residential areas that were designated for new housing are not directly visible from lower Wallace Street.

The Commission should consider the effects on the viewshed of new or modified parking lots, picnic areas, campgrounds, and other facilities whenever new construction or modifications are being planned.

Native and introduced trees, shrubs, and other plantings contribute to the historic landscape. They tell the story of how humans have used native and introduced plants for ornament, for food, for wood, and other purposes. Mining-related landscape features such as dredge ponds, tailings piles, ditches, and adit openings are important elements of the cultural landscape and should be protected.

Vines, trees, and other vegetation growing on or beside buildings are picturesque and in some cases historically accurate, but they create a fire hazard and also can damage the building's exterior and foundation by retaining water, roots going into the building, trees growing through eaves, and branches rubbing against the building.

Small-scale features such as fences, boardwalks, hitch rails, street lamps, horse troughs, monuments, benches, signs, street surface material, and paths are very important in maintaining and creating the desired historic ambiance in Virginia City and Nevada City. The sounds of highway traffic and aircraft intrude on the historic setting, but little can be done about these facts of modern life. In Virginia City, historic small-scale features should generally be preserved but not reconstructed if missing (an exception might be replacing missing street lights along lower Wallace Street). Encourage minimizing modern small-scale features throughout the town, in cooperation with the city and with private property owners. The Virginia City sign ordinance, for example, is a step in this direction. The Virginia City Design Guidelines make recommendations that complement the Commission's efforts, such as recommending that new sidewalks be of wood rather than concrete. Small-scale features in Nevada City should date to the early 1900s as much as possible.

The Commission should document all work that affects the landscape or small-scale features of state-owned properties.

Recommendations:

- Work closely and cooperatively with the city, county, and Bureau of Land Management to protect the surrounding terrain and encourage management of public lands within the watershed in a way that preserves the historic settings and

natural systems. Define the roles of each entity and establish regular meetings to help address these issues.

- Remove any landscaping that is damaging a building's exterior and/or foundations. Consider replanting with a tree of the same species but of a small size.
- Begin a list of appropriate landscaping.
- Prepare and implement a cultural landscape report for managing the vegetation on state-owned lands both within and outside the two townsites.
- Screen modern conveniences and elements such as trash containers, fire hose boxes, and utility lines. Place propane tanks, for example, in sheds that look like outbuildings from the 1800s (flammable materials should not be stored in historic buildings, so reconstruction of generic outbuildings is preferred in this case).

Options to Consider:

- Reintroduce historic landscaping as appropriate. In Virginia City, this must be well documented by archival and/or archaeological evidence for the site and be limited to replacement of lost elements. In Nevada City, the landscaping may conform to historic patterns identified for Montana communities of the early 1900s. A list of appropriate plants for Nevada City should be prepared. Plants with thorns, brittle limbs, or toxic properties should be avoided. In Nevada City, plantings of appropriate fast-growing bushes or trees might be considered for visually screening the incompatible buildings adjacent to the site.
- Historic plantings are often of great interest to visitors and can contribute greatly to the ambiance of historic sites. Gardens appropriate to a particular time period might be created in Nevada City at sites such as the Sedman House or in the Chinese area. Volunteers might be willing to help maintain the gardens, especially if Commission staff did the watering. Any remains of historic gardens (lilac bushes, rhubarb plants) should be documented and preserved. For example, hop vines (reportedly a variety brought by the Gilberts to use in their beer) were planted throughout Virginia City and cover the walls of many buildings. Organizations such as the Association of Living History Farms and Museums and the Seed Savers Exchange could help in designing appropriate plantings and locating seed sources for heirloom varieties of seeds and also identifying appropriate breeds of livestock.
- Various conservation easement groups might be able to help protect the viewshed. Other options to examine might include stricter zoning and putting together a consortium of people and organizations to buy development rights or even to buy land and protect it from inappropriate development.

- Small-scale features can help Nevada City “come to life.” For example, reminders of residents’ reliance on horses for travel, such as hitching rails and water troughs, can be placed in appropriate locations. Old mining machinery such as washing plants and ore carts might be placed around town. The community should not have too clean an appearance. Examine the photographic record of early 1900s communities around the state to get an idea of the amount and types of machinery “debris” that should be located in Nevada City.
- Highlight or even create photograph opportunities for visitors that emphasize the cultural landscape.
- Consider extending the boardwalks in Nevada City (some are just short segments in front of individual buildings) to make it look more like an actual town. Use historic designs and materials in constructing features such as fences, even when their purpose is simply to keep visitors out of certain areas.

Highway 287

Background: Highway 287 runs along Wallace Street right through Virginia City’s core historic area. This has several negative effects. First, the paved highway, traffic, and parking in front of historic buildings all intrude on the historic setting, limit photograph opportunities, and create noise and air pollution. Heavy truck traffic causes vibrations that may damage nearby fragile historic buildings. Large buses and recreational vehicles sometimes completely block the view of historic buildings along the streetscape. Virginia City’s guidelines for design review note that on-street parking within the historic commercial district should be for cars only.

In Nevada City, the highway also bisects the site, negatively affecting the visitor experience and the historic buildings. The highway creates a physical barrier between the Alder Gulch Short Line area and the rest of Nevada City and causes concern for visitor safety because the traffic here is high-speed. The area inside the gate is removed from the highway visually, however.

Guiding Principles: Relocating the highway to avoid historic Virginia City would be a major project. In 1995, the National Park Service estimated that this would cost approximately \$3.6 million. If this were done, lower Wallace Street could become a no-motorized-vehicle zone, which would greatly enhance and change many aspects of the visitors’ experience.

Some people fear that building a bypass highway would cause a drop in visitation and a consequent loss in business revenues because motorists would speed past the towns without realizing what they were missing. Leaving the highway as it is, however, limits efforts to restore the historic setting of Virginia City and reduces the overall appeal of the site.

Rerouting the highway to the north of Nevada City would provide a more unified experience for the visitor, reduce modern intrusions, and allow for the entire site to be gated and an admission fee to be charged. This would, however, affect the integrity of the site, because the historic road was located where the highway is today and continued to be used throughout the Bovey period. The potential impact on the National Register eligibility of Nevada City as a historic district, and on the surrounding cultural landscape, means that relocating the highway north of Nevada City is probably not a good option.

Until a parking plan is prepared, the Commission should encourage visitors to park in the lot below the Virginia City depot as much as possible.

Recommendations:

- Work with the city to establish a no-parking ordinance during the summer season between specific hours of the day, such as between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Restrict vehicles over a certain length to off-highway parking that is provided near the Virginia City depot.
- Prepare a parking plan that examines issues such as a parking ordinance, shuttle, vehicle size limits, and controlling the visitor flow.
- Meet with Montana Department of Transportation and city officials to discuss highway re-routing options.

Accessibility Issues

Background: In a 1999 visitor survey, about 12 percent of all respondent groups contained a disabled member. It is a challenge to provide equal access for all to Virginia City and Nevada City's cultural resources and interpretive services. In Virginia City, the steep grades everywhere but on Wallace Street make wheelchair use difficult. In both Virginia City and Nevada City, dirt and loose gravel make independent navigation from a wheelchair or with walking aids challenging. Many of the concessions are at least moderately accessible, and at the Virginia City depot a ramp was constructed to enable people in wheelchairs to have access to the train rides. Poorly maintained boardwalks have contributed to the problem.

Guiding Principles: As the population ages, a greater percentage of visitors will have mobility, vision, or hearing problems. Efforts to provide equal or alternative access for the handicapped should be made wherever possible, with primary attention given to the buildings of most interest to visitors, but the integrity of the historic buildings must be maintained (the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 does make an exception for historic buildings).

Audiovisual programs and visitor center exhibits help interpret the sites for people who might have difficulty with physical access. Marked handicapped parking spots, street access, and ramps on boardwalks are possible improvements that could be done relatively

easily. Signage and brochures help the hearing impaired. Large-print or audio versions of brochures help the visually impaired. The Commission should always consider alternative activities if certain programs or facilities cannot be made available to people with particular disabilities.

The Commission should include accessibility considerations in the early stages of design of any new facility or rehabilitation of an existing facility. Design all new construction or alterations to improve access to minimize material loss and visual change to historic properties. When planning new print or audiovisual publications, the Commission should take into account the needs of visitors with visual and hearing disabilities.

Recommendations:

- Invite someone who is confined to a wheelchair to visit both Virginia City and Nevada City and make comments and recommendations.
- Prepare and implement an accessibility plan.

Options to Consider:

- Offer wheelchair rentals, as is done at many historic sites.
- Reconstruct the boardwalk for disabled visitors.
- Install a TTD telephone for deaf visitors.
- Modify dim or poor lighting and glare in the furnished building displays to aid those with visual impairments.
- Add closed captions and amplified sound to the orientation video to help visitors with hearing problems.

Archaeological Investigations

Background: In 2000, as part of the Programmatic Agreement for the Virginia City Preservation Program, the Commission implemented a cooperative program with the University of Montana for archaeological testing and data recovery within the National Historical Landmark. The primary aim is to assess the nature and potential of various kinds of historic archaeological deposits and buried features that can contribute to the interpretation of the Landmark. Areas to be tested include deposits likely to be disturbed by building restoration and maintenance projects as well as any other deposits that are likely to yield significant knowledge of the town's history. Little is currently known about the potential for significant archaeological properties within the Landmark. Over one hundred years of tourism have made surface artifacts rare.

The first professional archaeological work done in Virginia City was conducted in 2000. The work included monitoring of ground-disturbing activities (a member of the preservation crew serves as the on-staff archaeologist), testing areas to be disturbed by preservation work in the next two years, and testing other deposits. The testing methods minimized damage to the setting and architectural fabric of Virginia City. No units were excavated in front of commercial buildings, and samples within buildings were small and often within potentially disturbed areas. The work conducted in 2000 yielded many diagnostic artifacts and other items of interest, including pieces of wallpaper and painted plaster, a stone walkway on the west side of the Gilbert House that may date from the 1860s, and the boardwalk in front of the Chinese temple that no longer stands.

In 2001, University personnel will develop an Archaeological Management Plan for state work in Virginia City. This will guide the Commission's archaeological work in Virginia City for new undertakings outside the Park Service grant awarded in 2000 for preservation work. It will connect the archaeological record to more overarching research questions and to management issues.

The situation in Nevada City is somewhat different, as the Programmatic Agreement only covers the Virginia City National Historic Landmark. Even so, the Commission receives some federal funding and therefore must monitor any ground-disturbing activities in Nevada City, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This is quite important because the locations of many original buildings and features in Nevada City are not known.

Guiding Principles: Archaeological investigations can help build a more complete picture of a community by preventing the loss of significant data not available from historic research. Artifacts and buried features provide an avenue to understanding the past that is complementary to the study of standing architecture and historic documents.

The Commission should identify and preserve (through avoidance or through archaeological mitigation if a site must be disturbed) any archaeological remains that are found through investigations or in any other way. Staff and visitors should be encouraged to leave any surface finds in their original location rather than picking them up.

The Commission should make sure to integrate new archaeological discoveries in Nevada City with the Interpretive Plan for the site.

Recommendations:

- Since Nevada City will not be incorporated in the forthcoming Archaeological Management Plan, prepare guidelines for archaeological work in Nevada City.

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

General

Background: Collection management refers to the identification, evaluation, selection, and treatment of historic artifacts and documents. The collection of artifacts owned by the state in Virginia City and Nevada City is huge. It consists of some 300,000 artifacts, ranging from very small objects such as hat pins up to large objects such as mining equipment and wagons. The artifacts are located in 46 buildings in Nevada City and 53 or 54 in Virginia City. Approximately two-thirds of the artifacts are currently in Nevada City. Most of the artifacts date from the late 1880s through the 1890s; very few are from the 1863-1875 time period. The items in the collection purchased in 1997 belong to the Montana Historical Society, and the Commission is charged with displaying and managing them for the benefit of the public. Artifacts obtained since 1997 are owned by the Commission.

The collection of artifacts owned by the state, almost all of them acquired by the Boveys between the 1940s and the 1970s, is one of the largest and most significant assemblages of items documenting the history and development of turn-of-the-century Montana. Most of the textile collection, for example, is not duplicated anywhere else. The Boveys bought unsold stock of old clothing and other items in their original packaging; this is very unusual. Many artifacts are similar or are duplicates, such as thimbles and children's shoes. Some historic artifacts are used by the public, such as hotel and restaurant furniture, art work, and decorative art. Movie props, reproductions, and items purchased by the Boveys for sale in gift shops are also part of the collection, along with objects obtained through archaeological work and some archival items such as historic photographs.

Many of the artifacts, as they are displayed and stored now and have been for decades, are deteriorating rapidly and require improved conditions to halt their destruction. Some require conservation and restoration to reverse the process.

Many of the artifacts in the collection have deteriorated and will not have any interpretive or other values unless the deterioration is arrested through proper storage and display. For example, one room in the Sedman House had more than a dozen serious conservation problems when the state bought the property, including artifacts stored on the floor, improper mending of furniture, dust, insect infestations, and curtains that turned to powder when touched.

As a major step in properly caring for its artifacts, the state agreed to the construction of the McFarland Curatorial Center in 1999 as a year-round facility for the storage, research, conservation, and interpretation of the extensive collection owned by the state. It was made possible by a grant from Ruth McFarland in memory of Lee Craig McFarland. The building is leased to the Commission by the Montana Historical Society Foundation, and it is jointly operated and staffed by the Commission, Montana Historical Society, and the

Montana Historical Society Foundation. The Commission's curatorial staff and volunteers are based in this building.

The Commission works with the Montana Historical Society to make sure the curatorial center is operated in a professional manner. This gives the Commission access to broad resources, including the professionals working at the Montana Historical Society museum in Helena. Since that museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums, the work done in Virginia City and Nevada City must also operate on all levels according to the highest and most current professional standards and practices.

The storage space in the curatorial center can accommodate approximately 50,000 artifacts. It protects objects from adverse environmental conditions, including pest infestations; provides physical security and fire protection; and has archivally sound storage units and supplies. Some items are stored in open areas, some in boxes on shelves, some are hung vertically, and others are stored by specialized storage methods. The conservation laboratory has some but not all of the equipment that is needed for cleaning and stabilizing fragile historic artifacts. Additional curatorial work equipment is also needed. The building also includes offices and other work areas.

A curator of collections joined the staff in 1999. The curator is currently preparing a Collection Management Plan that articulates the purpose of the collection and methods of achieving this purpose. It may include the following information: scope of collections; acquisition policy; loan policies; access to artifacts; deaccession policies; conservation of artifacts; a housekeeping plan for the furnished building displays and other exhibits; inventory and recordkeeping procedures; access policies; insurance; reproduction and copyright; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other laws; education or research collection; and public disclosure. Many of these topics have already been addressed by Commission staff and committees.

Soon after the state purchased the Bovey properties, several dozen feet of ledger books from Virginia City businesses plus other archival material were transferred to the Montana Historical Society Library and Archives in Helena. These included historic photographs collected by the Boveys and others documenting their work in Virginia City and Nevada City. Title to this material was recently granted to the Montana Historical Society by the Ford Bovey estate. Staff continues to find more archival material as the contents of the buildings at the two sites are inventoried.

The Commission hired a curator of collections in 1999 and a curatorial assistant in the fall of 2000. The state also plans to continue the internship program that brings in students who have some museum experience to work during the summers. It is clear, however, that the current level of staffing is not adequate to inventory, accession, and take care of the immediate needs of the 300,000 artifacts in the collection within a few years. The time required for all this work is staggering.

Guiding Principles: People visit Virginia City and Nevada City in order to see the artifacts, together with the buildings and the historic setting. Visitors want to see the real

thing. The artifacts play a critical role in bringing history alive to the public. The interpretive program relies heavily on artifacts for display. Yet if the artifacts are not cared for so that they will survive for future generations, the state will have little reason to continue managing the properties.

The Commission's basic collection management philosophy is to work to ensure the long-term preservation of the artifacts by providing proper environmental conditions and adequate security; physical control over and appropriate access to the collections; and intellectual control over and access to the collections.

First priorities for collection management, along with completing the inventory of the collection, should be protecting the most sensitive or threatened objects. This would include steps to correct improperly displayed items such as textiles, to oil outdoor wagons and put them up on blocks, to protect objects displayed outdoors from the weather, to remove rare or fragile items to more secure and environmentally safe sites, and to provide more control of visitor access. Some of these tasks may sound rather straightforward, but often sheer numbers make the task challenging. For example, outdoor objects that need to be protected from the weather include twenty-two railroad cars (many with leaking roofs) and over sixty horse-drawn or other non-motorized vehicles.

In general, storage and work spaces should be the priority in the curatorial center, with interpretation to visitors secondary. Open or visible storage is probably not practical in Virginia City in the near future, given levels of staffing, security concerns, and other priorities.

Many of the artifacts in the collection will continue to be displayed in Virginia City and Nevada City. Besides the building displays, selected artifacts should be displayed in permanent and rotating exhibits at the visitor center and perhaps other exhibits. Fragile or valuable items that need special protection should be stored in the curatorial center or exhibited in environmentally controlled spaces.

The Commission should not display certain types of artifacts, such as human skeletal remains. The Thompson-Hickman Museum displays the skeletal foot of Clubfoot George. This display is highly popular with visitors, but the state should not condone this practice.

Curatorial tasks for volunteers should complement the individual's skills and needs and the needs of the Commission. Security checks should be done on volunteers. Tasks such as housekeeping chores, data entry (cataloguing), monitoring the collection, and photographing or videotaping objects are appropriate. When trained and supervised, volunteers can also work on cleaning displays, cleaning individual artifacts, and even artifact repairs. Volunteers can be extremely helpful, especially if they are willing to follow correct procedures, but they do require supervision as well as space for working. Elderhostel groups have been used in the past to do some curatorial work, although it is difficult to use volunteers effectively for such short periods because of the training required.

Students from graduate-level training programs in archaeology, museum curation, and conservation can be used to work on the collection. Two student interns worked during the summer of 2000. The tasks of the interns included helping process over 800 objects from the two blacksmith shops that had to be emptied in preparation for preservation work; helping with Elderhostel; cleaning display buildings; entering records in the computer catalog; writing instructions for the catalog; and inventorying items in concession buildings.

The curator has established connections with related organizations such as the Yellowstone Museum Partnership, and this should be continued. Such networking provides an opportunity for sharing staff and board professional development, attending training workshops, and accessing a clearinghouse for general collections information that may be valuable to the Commission.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a plan of action in case of an emergency such as fire, earthquake, or equipment failure. This should include a salvage priority sequence for the collection, with staff trained to take care of this in the event of an emergency. Store emergency supplies in appropriate locations.
- Hire a conservator on a consulting basis, with the goal of eventually having a conservator on staff.
- Provide museum training to selected members of the Commission staff, particularly those who handle or pack objects for any reason, through programs such as the Colonial Williamsburg Seminar or the Campbell Center.

Options to Consider:

- Down the road, the collection could form the basis of a curatorial training center. This is a low priority, however, until the many pressing needs of the collection have been met.

Inventorying, Accessioning, and Cataloguing the Collection

Background: Until 1999, none of the collection had been inventoried or accessioned according to professional museum standards. The first items inventoried in this on-going work were artifacts in buildings used by concessionaires (including items in use and on display). Artifacts located in buildings undergoing preservation work have also been inventoried, removed from their on-site locations, and stored in the curatorial center in preparation for the work. Selected items were accessioned into the collection. The curator of collections has implemented a registration and cataloging system. If the collection contains 300,000 artifacts as estimated, it would take one person 37.5 years to spend just 15 minutes per object.

The lack of written records documenting the provenance and significance of the artifacts is a major challenge. The curator is recording provenance information on specific artifacts known only by long-time Bovey employee and current Commission employee

Commission collection management policy (1997 draft):

The museum collections of Virginia and Nevada Cities will be managed to support the interpretive, educational, and preservation mission of the sites. They will be managed in strict adherence to the professional, ethical, and curatorial standards of the American Association of Museums (AAM), the AAM Curator's Committee, and the Montana Historical Society Museum as befitting the specific circumstances of Virginia and Nevada Cities. These standards and policies will be applied to all artifacts which are considered to be part of the permanent museum collection. Separate guidelines will apply to historic items not in the permanent museum collection that have been designated appropriate for consumptive use (e.g., hotel furniture, items in hands-on education programs, etc.).

John Ellingsen. In order to document the locations of artifacts when they were purchased by the state, Commission staff is filming artifacts in location with the assistance of volunteers. Recently acquired artifacts, such as archaeological objects, have been accessioned and catalogued. The curatorial staff has processed over 2,000 artifacts so far and has accessioned about 800. Approximately 200 of the items accessioned are from the two blacksmith shops that the preservation crew is working on.

Guiding Principles: The Commission should ensure that the inventory of the collection remains a high priority. This is a time-consuming process, as many of the artifacts are packed tightly into rooms in the rear of buildings, lofts of barns, and otherwise unoccupied buildings. Accessioning and its accompanying paperwork

should be deferred as much as possible until the inventory has been completed. Commission staff will then know exactly how many lamp chimneys, for example, are in the collection, where they are located, and what their condition is. This information is critical for making informed decisions about whether particular objects belong in the permanent collection or in the education/hands-on collection and which might be transferred out.

The Commission plans to maintain records on the use and disposal of all artifacts in the collection, using standardized techniques. Each artifact will eventually have its own file, containing photographs, exhibit records, any background information known, plus a computer catalog record to aid in tracking and retrieval. Records on non-accessioned objects are maintained in a separate database.

The best deaccessioning policy is a good accessioning policy. Items that will eventually be included in the permanent, accessioned collection are intended for preservation, exhibition, and research. The decision of what to accession should be made on an object by object, site by site basis, but not until the inventory has been completed. Some of the

artifacts in the collection will not be accessioned, although they will be considered part of the permanent collection and will require tracking and inspection. These may include furnishings and other materials currently in public areas and concessions; items used in educational/hands-on collections; and props that were produced specifically for exhibit or display. Parts, tools, and machinery needed for maintaining buildings or objects in the collection should be generally inventoried but not accessioned into the permanent collection and should be transferred to the maintenance shop in Nevada City (some of these, however, may be good for a display on the Boveys' preservation work). On occasion, an object in a concession may be placed in the permanent accessioned collection; a replacement policy for such objects removed from where they have traditionally been used should be prepared.

Replicas can be effectively used in place of originals in building displays or in other public places such as concessionaire buildings. They also work well in hands-on interpretive programs. Reproduction and copyright policies refer to the creation of images from the collection and the ownership of copyright of collection objects. Licensing the collection provides an opportunity for revenue generation.

Curatorial staff should perform periodic physical inventories of the collection (random samples or inventories of items valued over a certain amount).

Recommendations:

- Complete the inventory of the entire collection by the end of 2002. Defer accessioning as much as possible to hasten the inventory.
- Prepare and implement a collection management plan, including housekeeping procedures.
- Continue interviews to determine provenance of particular objects as a high priority, as this information may otherwise be lost.
- Accession and catalogue artifacts in the permanent collection.

Options to Consider:

- Replicas may be made available for purchase, perhaps as part of an "Alder Gulch Collection" (the Museum Store Association might be a source of ideas and of similar merchandise from other sites). This may not be a high priority, as such a program might be quite expensive to establish. Smaller items unique to Alder Gulch should be pursued, however, such as calendars, tapes and CDs of the music machine music, or reproduction historic photographs.

Policy for Acquisition of New Artifacts

Background: Acquisition of artifacts refers to artifacts that may be acquired by gift, purchase, exchange, transfer, field collection, and loan.

Some gaps in the collection have already been identified. The 1863-1875 time period is not well represented in the collection as it exists today, although it is a highly significant period in Virginia City's history. This time period is poorly understood in terms of the material objects that were available to the people in Virginia City for daily use. Archaeological excavation of sites occupied only during that period might be helpful.

The collection already includes several items that are on loan from individuals to the Commission, such as the Wilbur Fisk Sanders desk in the Sedman House. The Bureau of Land Management has loaned a Chilean mill to the state on an annually renewed, long-term basis. Borrowing objects such as these can allow the Commission to provide more comprehensive exhibits and to make objects accessible that would otherwise be seen by only a few. Currently, incoming loans are generally discouraged because of issues of legal liability.

Some objects have traditionally been maintained in working order on site, such as the music machines, Opera House Cremona, and the printing press in the Montana Post building. The curator of collections has already determined that some items that are being used in particular concessions, such as most of the arcade machines in the Bale of Hay Saloon, should remain there and not be accessioned. The music machines in Nevada City are very popular with visitors but are a special concern. Currently, about half are in working order.

Guiding Principles: The Commission and the Montana Historical Society established acquisition rules that became effective April 2000. These guidelines are very important because any acquisition represents a long-term commitment to preservation of the artifact. An Acquisitions Committee evaluates each potential donation according to these criteria:

1. Is it relevant to the Virginia City/Nevada City story?
2. Does it fill a void in the collection?
3. Does it represent the time period being interpreted?
4. Is it in good enough condition for long-term preservation with available resources?
5. Can it be properly housed, cared for, and exhibited?
6. Is Virginia City or Nevada City the best place for the item?

Some of these questions will be difficult to answer until the inventory of all items in the collection has been completed.

A limited number of items that continue the story past the death of Sue Bovey in 1988 should be considered for acquisition. Objects related to the Commission history of the

site should be added as necessary, especially those that bridge the gap between the past and modern-day visitors.

Research on the object or type of object being considered for acquisition will be done before the final determination is made. An object that is connected with the site or with people connected with the site greatly increases the interpretive value of the object because such a connection sparks people's imagination. If an object fills a known gap in the collection, such as an item that could be used in a display on Virginia City's role in the territorial government, and it meets the other criteria, then it should be accepted. If such an item has associations with Bannack, for example, it should be offered to Bannack State Park first because Virginia City may not be the best home for the artifact. Gifts with limiting conditions are discouraged. The Commission retains the option to dispose of donated items at a later date.

The simple fact that the Boveys collected an item does not mean it should remain in the collection forever, with all of the expenses that entails. For example, it is probably not appropriate for the Commission to accession 1920s wicker furniture from Canyon Lodge in Yellowstone National Park. Deaccessioning should be done in accordance with federal law (the Antiquities Act), state law, and Montana Historical Society policy. According to policy established in 1999, the Commission should be offered the first right of refusal for any deaccessioned items from the Virginia City and Nevada City collection. The curatorial committee and then the Montana Historical Society trustees will review any deaccessioning decisions.

In the case of items with many duplicates, the best policy would be to save representative examples of the collection and enough duplicates to allow for displaying items well into the future. Remaining duplicates could then be available for a study collection, for hands-on interpretation, for period trade demonstrations, or for sale or trade.

Trading or selling artifacts could allow the Commission to fill some of the gaps in the collection and thus improve the interpretive program. Any monies obtained by selling artifacts should go back into the collections. Some of the artifacts in the collection, however, are in too poor shape to sell or trade.

Using artifacts for hands-on demonstrations is highly desirable, particularly for school programs and special groups. This greatly enhances the visitor experience; touching and using an artifact is a great way to engage people with the past. This kind of use of artifacts is sometimes critical to keep people aware of the need to protect historic resources. All archaeological materials recovered on lands owned by the state should be evaluated for possible accession or use in the hands-on collection. Once an artifact can no longer be used for hands-on interpretation, it can then be used in a static display.

In general, the Commission should move away from the practice of displaying artifacts in concessions. A compromise might be to use only duplicate artifacts or to use reproductions.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate each furnished building display for historical accuracy to ensure that artifacts are not inappropriately grouped or interpreted.
- Develop guidelines for incoming and outgoing loans and for exhibiting borrowed objects. Such guidelines should help reduce concerns about liability or other issues such as intellectual control over proposed exhibits.
- Once the inventory has been completed, determine (in consultation with the Montana Historical Society) which artifacts and objects do not fit the acquisition policy or scope of collection.
- Once the inventory has been completed, establish a separate collection designed for educational purposes. This collection may include replicas as well as historic artifacts. The artifacts selected for this collection should be disposable, redundant, and/or outside the scope of the accessioned, permanent collections. Some durable objects currently in the collection that do not have associations with Alder Gulch, such as blacksmith tools, flatirons, or mining machinery, can and should be used in current interpretive programs.
- Determine uses for items not being accessioned and items not part of education collection; the options include concessionaire displays, selling, and trading.
- Bring in a specialist to prescribe annual maintenance and analyze the importance and value of the music machine collection. This would help with determining long-term goals for this group of artifacts (including whether they should all remain in the collection), preserving the machines for the long term, keeping certain machines operating, and interpreting their significance in the national context.
- Prepare and implement an archival management plan.
- Once the inventory of the collection has been completed, define the gaps in the collection as explicitly as possible and develop a collection needs list. Justify acceptance of artifacts not original to the site only by reference to the needs list, which will develop over time as research efforts continue and as interpretive programs develop. Some of the needs list will be directed to specific displays, perhaps as defined in a Historic Furnishing Study for a particular building. Include representative items to use in hands-on interpretation. Explore collaboration with regional historical societies and museums.

Options to Consider:

- Establish a natural history collection with emphasis on two aspects. One would be a reference collection of pests to help the staff identify pests in different life-cycle stages that are affecting the collection. The second would be geological specimens (mineral samples, for example) to aid in the understanding and interpretation of the mining history of Alder Gulch.
- The Montana Historical Society and the Commission may choose to loan artifacts from the Virginia City/Nevada City collection to other institutions (the Commission has already taken some artifacts on the road to a film trade show).

Conservation of Artifacts

Background: Conservation of artifacts has two phases: 1) preventive conservation, including cleaning and repair environmental controls in display and storage spaces, and 2) conservation intervention, which is more treatment oriented and can be expensive. No conservation intervention work is currently being done.

Many of the artifacts in the collection may be worthless in twenty years without some form of conservation. Once an object deteriorates or is damaged, it can never be fully restored, even through costly conservation treatment. If conservation work is done on an object that was deteriorating because of a poor environment, it is a waste of money if that object is then returned to the same environment. Most of the collection, however, will continue to be stored in less-than-ideal conditions in either Virginia City or Nevada City.

Most of the Virginia City and Nevada City collection is displayed seasonally in furnished building displays. Because most of these spaces are environmentally uncontrolled (the buildings are not sealed), the artifacts have been subjected to damage over time. Many of the building displays have not been changed at all for over twenty years; some have been in place for over fifty years. The artifacts in the displays may look intact to the public, but when they are touched, they simply disintegrate. To the Boveys, an item soiled by the dirt and wear of use was more “valuable” than a similar new, unused item. This approach cannot be continued, however, without irreversible damage to the artifacts.

Temperature, relative humidity, and biological agents are the most serious threats to the Virginia City collection. Some displays are infested with pests such as dermestids. Many fragile items susceptible to damage by light are located in store display windows. These include boxes, labels, fabric, anything printed or painted, and wood cabinetry. The bread, candy, and other food items on display in several buildings is real food, some of it twenty years old, posing a health risk from mold, fungi, and vermin. Some cans on display are leaking, some have exploded, and labels have popped off bottles. Visitors drop food in buildings and climb on vehicles stored in outbuildings.

Southwestern Montana is a region of low humidity, and this has undoubtedly helped preserve the artifacts over the years. According to one expert, the player pianos in

Nevada City are better preserved than almost any others in the country; several are still operating with the original rubber tubing. Even so, low relative humidity can cause desiccation and embrittlement or splitting of many materials. High relative humidity, on the other hand, promotes corrosion of metal (such as the metal on stoves or harnesses), mold growth, and insect activity. Extreme fluctuations of both temperature and humidity in one day can be very damaging to artifacts. Pronounced fluctuations cause structural damage such as cracking and detachment of component parts. Relative humidity should ideally be maintained at a stable point between 40 percent and 65 percent, with fluctuations no greater than 3 percent in one day, with gradual seasonal variations.

Light acts cumulatively to promote the breakdown of molecular bonds in materials, leading to embrittlement and the fading and darkening of pigments and dyes. Light can damage wood, textiles, paper, leather, paintings, photographs, natural history specimens, and other organic materials. Metal, stone, and glass are generally not prone to deterioration due to light. These effects can be minimized by limiting exposure time, lowering the light levels, and filtering out the visible light. Interior lighting systems should be low in ultraviolet emissions. Incandescent lighting should be used in collection areas instead of fluorescent bulbs or lamps.

Dust and other airborne pollutants can wear away surface detail and promote damage caused by other pollutants. Sources include highway dust, wood smoke, and dirt from the floors of outbuildings or tracked in by visitors and staff. Currently, Commission staff dust all the displays and wipe and vacuum display cases at least once a year. This takes three or four people several weeks to accomplish.

Pests such as silverfish, dermestids, moths, and powder-post beetles devour wool, wood, and cellulosic materials. Rodents destroy objects by eating them or using them to build nests. Dead flies in windowsills attract dermestids, which later move into collections.

A conservation assessment of the historic artifacts housed in twenty-nine buildings in Virginia City was performed in 1994. The report provided broad conservation priorities for those resources (Nevada City was not examined).

In 2000, two assessors outlined the conservation needs of the vehicle collection (wagons, buggies, fire wagons, coaches, and sleighs). They determined that many pieces are in extremely critical condition and will likely deteriorate beyond repair within five or ten years. Recommended intervention included storage in an environmentally controlled facility and treatment by a skilled conservator. A few pieces that do not have enough left to conserve are candidates for complete restoration because of their historical significance. The assessment also recommended regular annual maintenance of all the collection's vehicles, including vacuuming the surfaces, removing debris, and oiling selected wagons. They also suggested beginning conservation treatment on at least one vehicle each year.

Guiding Principles: The key to long-term preservation of the collection is practicing preventive conservation. This includes monitoring and controlling the display

environments, applying proper storage and exhibit techniques, practicing proper handling, and implementing an ongoing housekeeping program. The collection is most threatened in this order: archival material (paper and photographs), textiles, organic materials, inorganic materials.

The desirability of dusting and cleaning the artifacts in building displays has been a matter of some debate, with some arguing that the dust provides historic ambiance. Virginia City and Nevada City are not abandoned ghost towns, however, and the Commission has a mandate to preserve the artifacts. Allowing them to remain in dirty conditions goes against this mandate because of the intrusion of deteriorating agents such as dust, insects, rodents, mold, mildew, and fungus. In almost all cases, the displays should be cleaned or the artifacts will soon be in no condition to display and too far gone to be restored. Depending on the interpretive goals, a few displays such as blacksmith shops might be left with some cobwebs and grease intact to give an air of realism (for example, a smoke-covered window could be interpreted as allowing the blacksmith to examine the color of the glow of heated metal for tempering the steel). In general, the windows in all buildings with displays should be washed to facilitate visitor viewing, even if the building owner might not have done so in the past.

Diligent housekeeping, environmental monitoring, and integrated pest management will always be necessary for the Virginia City and Nevada City collections. Poor housekeeping procedures accelerate deterioration of artifacts. A written annual maintenance plan/housekeeping schedule for the entire collection is being developed as part of the Collection Management Plan. Thorough cleanings should be done in the spring and fall in buildings with significant displays, as these are the critical seasons for pest control. Vacuum dead flies in all collection areas on a regular basis. Clean with low-suction vacuums (this requires electricity, however). Other techniques can be used for fragile or porous items. Those doing the cleaning should be well trained in the proper procedures. The Commission should use insect and rodent traps to detect the presence, quantities, and entry points of insects and rodents. Make that all pest control measures follow the principles of Integrated Pest Management.

Another preventive conservation measure is rotating objects between storage and display. Artifacts in most of the building displays, particularly textiles and other rather fragile items, should be rotated in order to meet the mission of protecting the resources. This can be accomplished by removing some of the many duplicate items in store displays, for example, and cleaning, repairing, and storing the ones not on display in the curatorial center. Some furnishings might be changed annually, others on a much less frequent basis. Certain displays have exceptional significance just as they are, such as the McGovern Store, and steps should be taken to protect the artifacts from light, dust, and pests. The decision on rotating artifacts must be made on a building-by-building basis.

The treatment of artifacts displayed in an uncontrolled historic structure is often the least cost-effective conservation dollar spent. The more objects placed on exhibit, the higher the treatment costs. Conservation treatments that go beyond stabilization are required in Virginia City and Nevada City, however, because of the exhibits that feature furnished

interiors. Deciding which artifacts to protect with improved storage conditions, which to do conservation work on, and which to restore is complicated. Curatorial resources should be spread as equally as possible over the collection, including both the economically valuable objects and those that are less glamorous but also significant, such as mining- and transportation-related items. Criteria for determining whether to do preventive work, conservation work, or restoration of a particular artifact include:

- Artifact condition and material type
- Association with Virginia City and Nevada City
- Historical significance
- Availability of similar items
- Interpretive potential
- Value
- Cost of conservation

Priorities for treating artifacts should take into account their potential use in interpretive programs. Thus, a kitchen stove owned by Nevada City's Finney family would be of higher priority than a sheepherder's stove from the 1930s, all other factors being equal, even if the sheepherder's stove had a much higher monetary value.

The Commission should consider enclosing some displays that are currently exposed to dust and insects.

Recommendations:

- Relocate within same building items that are being damaged by light.
- Remove badly deteriorated or hazardous items.
- Remove very valuable, fragile, or rare items to a site with environmental controls.
- Remove all real food and replace some with replicas.
- Relocate items stored on floors.
- Take down textiles and posters that have been tacked to walls.
- Repair leaking roofs of railroad cars.
- Put entry mats in the entrances of buildings with lots of traffic to reduce the amount of dirt brought in from outside.
- Rotate selected artifacts in furnished building displays.
- Build a wagon storage/exhibit facility that is climate controlled, as recommended in a preliminary vehicle assessment prepared in April 2000.

- Fit all windows of buildings containing artifacts with protection that reduces damage to artifacts from sunlight. These may be opaque window shades or curtains, preferably of period-appropriate styles and materials, that are closed whenever the displays are not being viewed by the public or the staff does not need the lighting. Or, they might consist of ultraviolet shields such as Lexan panels.
- Once the immediate needs of the most-threatened artifacts have been taken care of and the inventory of the collection has been completed, hire a qualified conservator to prepare a comprehensive conservation assessment. This will establish priorities for conservation treatment of specific items. It will also establish a schedule for completing conservation treatment on specific artifacts.
- Begin collecting baseline data and establish regular monitoring of environmental conditions. For example, install hydrothermographs in key display and storage areas to record humidity and temperature changes over time. Keep logs of daily observations and of weather. This information will help in planning for retrofitting and prioritizing and will help assess the effectiveness of any environmental control measures.

Options to Consider:

- To obtain more environmentally controlled storage space, build enclosures around items needing to be stored in better conditions. Acquire modular sealed storage units such as a Bally building for storing vulnerable items within an existing building(s). Bally buildings provide a virtually air-tight environment in which a museum environment can be maintained.
- Install climate-controlled exhibit cabinets to display certain fragile or valuable artifacts. These might not be appropriate in the furnished building displays, but they would certainly be appropriate for interpretive exhibits, whether in the visitor center or elsewhere.

INTERPRETATION

General

Background: People who visit historic sites want to learn and they want to have fun. Virginia City and Nevada City are able to tell a part of the American story more powerfully and effectively than can books, pictures, or other media. They do not speak to us directly, however. Would a first-time visitor to Virginia City today know that this small town was once a booming mining camp with 5,000 residents and that it served as the state's second territorial capital? Interpretation clarifies, explains, and deciphers what visitors see so that they can begin to understand another time or generation. It provides opportunities for visitors to reach a deeper and richer level of understanding of the relationships between tangible resources and their intangible and universal values and meanings. As an additional benefit, understanding leads to appreciation, which leads to protection.

Many people visit Virginia City and Nevada City because they want to see the "real thing." The historic ambiance is perhaps of greater significance than any single structure in the two communities. The buildings, artifacts, and landscape, taken as a whole, have the ability to tell a powerful story. They provide physical links to the past and open the doors to discovering Montana's history. Well-planned, high-quality interpretive programs will increase the ability of the site to tell its story.

Current interpretation at Virginia City and Nevada City essentially continues the services provided by Bovey Restorations. In 2000, however, the Commission opened a visitor center in the Virginia City depot. There, displays of historic photographs and text provide some orientation to Alder Gulch and its historic resources. Visitors can pick up a self-guided walking tour brochure to Virginia City prepared by Commission and Montana Historical Society staff and explore the buildings of Virginia City with brochure in hand. They can watch a video on a particular topic, talk to a Commission staffperson, or browse in the gift shop. They can also purchase tickets to the train connecting Virginia City and Nevada City. Guided tours are available on request. Concessionaires offer a stagecoach tour, panning for gold, and nineteenth-century performances at the Opera House and Brewery.

The stories of Virginia City are ultimately the stories of the evolution of a nation and a unique American social order. These stories cannot be dissociated from the larger picture of the whole series of mining frontiers of the Far West. They are intricately linked with the world-reknown[ed] technological achievements associated with western mining, and the environmental consequences of that mining. The political, social, and economic realities of the mining frontiers ultimately shaped the character of the West as we know it today. The stories of Virginia City will help us better understand ourselves as a nation, and, hopefully, better equip us to face the future.

-- Denver Service Center, National Park Service, *Special Resource Study/Environmental Assessment: Virginia City*, 1995, p. 31

Interpretation provided by organizations other than the Commission include two museums, displays in the Hangman's Building, school group tours, and a tour in a 1940s fire truck.

Interpretation in Nevada City during the summer of 2000 relied on a self-guided walking tour brochure prepared by Commission and Montana Historical Society staff. This brochure was given to every visitor who paid the \$5 admission fee. Visitors may look at the railroad-related artifacts and may go inside the music hall for free. A few other building displays are available for viewing outside the gate.

Guiding Principles: The overall interpretive program should be creative and innovative rather than static and fixed. The research behind the interpretive programs should be accurate and inclusive, giving Virginia City and Nevada City a high-quality reputation. New ideas and conditions should lead to modification or replacement of existing programs. Interpretive programs should be designed to appeal to new audiences, not just those who are already interested in history, architecture, and artifacts. The Commission should be open to change and new approaches even though some visitors want the two sites to stay "exactly the same" for generations. The most powerful programs are those that allow visitors to make or do something themselves. Guided tours and other forms of formal interpretation generally only attract those who are already interested in history. Changing the interpretive programs and displays and providing different programs on different days keeps people in the area longer and makes them want to come back.

Visitors should be able to experience, understand, and enjoy Virginia City and Nevada City to the depth and degree of formality they wish and at their own pace. They are a non-captive audience; they can leave at any time. They may be in the area for outdoor recreation, special events, conferences, visiting friends and relatives, or because of specific interest in topics such as architecture, mining, or railroads. They expect an informal atmosphere and a nonacademic approach. They have different learning styles and enjoy different types of programs. Visitors generally fall into the following continuum describing their purpose and understanding: recreation, nostalgia, information, connections, and stewardship. A mix of interpretive media should be provided to spark the imagination of all visitors.

Good interpretation relates information to people, because history happens in relation to people. Programs should focus on compelling stories and on universal emotions, such as the desire for financial success or for adventure. It is important to depict the homes and working lives of ordinary people, because their experience is often much closer to that of visitors. Diaries, letters, newspaper accounts, advertisements, speeches, and oral histories can all help engage and involve visitors and bring out multiple viewpoints. The past should be related to today. Visitors should think about themselves and their own experiences as they learn about the history of Virginia City. Individual visitors will see different meanings in the same resource.

In general, interpretation does not simply communicate facts and figures (interpretation is a seed, not a tree). Carefully selected facts can be supportive and illuminating, but they

are not the ends in themselves. Interpretation reveals meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, through first-hand experience, and by illustrative media. The visitor should be helped to imagine what Alder Gulch once looked like. The impressions created by interpretation should be carefully grounded in purpose and should illuminate the past, not merely entertain the present.

Many interpretive techniques are described in the following pages, and none is inherently better than any other. The Commission should ensure that the overall interpretive program offers the interpretive themes through as many different techniques as are appropriate, based partly on the visitor profile.

Interpretation can be classified in two broad categories: personal and non-personal services. Personal services are those provided directly by people, such as guided tours, talks, street theater, workshops, living history, evening musicals, roving interpretation, and period trades. When well done, people talking directly to people is more effective than any other approach. The interpreter can respond immediately to the particular audience's needs and interests.

Non-personal services include walking tour brochures, furnished building displays, wayside exhibits, books and Websites and other publications, educational materials, museum exhibits, videos, and audio tours. These methods are impersonal and are not flexible, but they are available whenever they are needed. Although they require relatively high investments of time and money to be developed, they do not entail the continuing staffing costs that personal services require.

An ongoing tension, one that will not go away, is that between the need for the Commission to protect and preserve the resources under its care and its mandate to become self-supporting through entrepreneurial activities. The interpretive potential per dollar must therefore be maximized, but without compromising the resources nor the Commission's commitment to historical accuracy.

Some broad guidelines for interpretation in both Virginia City and Nevada City are as follows:

- Organize the interpretation around themes that link information to the visitor.
- Base interpretation on solid historical research; do not make assumptions.
- Make sure visitors understand real vs. fake (buildings and interiors).
- Do not alter historic fabric, artifacts, or settings.
- Expect the interpretive programs to evolve over time.
- Emphasize layers of history.
- Make sure the interpretation is provocative, interactive, hands-on, and sensory as much as possible.
- Offer changing exhibits, tours, events, and activities.
- Provide activities that appeal to children.
- Include information on non-state-owned properties and on the setting.
- Respect private property.

The Commission should prepare an Interpretive Plan for its properties as soon as possible. This plan will identify the key stories for both sites and the corridor in between and flesh out the general recommendations provided in this report. It will recommend uses for specific state-owned buildings in both Virginia City and Nevada City ranging from furnished building displays to employee housing. It will outline proposed new interpretive services, such as guided walking tours, exhibits, and living history. The plan will also familiarize staff with the history of the area and provide details on key topics and principle themes tied to specific places. The interpretive mission, outcomes, goals, and objectives will be defined and ways to measure their success identified. In order to build cooperation with other organizations and with local residents, the plan should discuss all historic sites in the Alder Gulch area, not just the state-owned properties, and these other players should be involved in the preparation of the plan.

The Commission should not try to introduce too many new interpretive programs at once, even if that were possible. Instead, staff should concentrate on doing one or two things well. Start small, test the waters, and move forward if a new service or approach is well received. If not, try something else. Do not endlessly make plans and try to figure out the perfect program.

Children traveling with family groups are a very important audience in Virginia City and Nevada City. Children respond well to hands-on activities, story-telling, and publications written specifically for them. The programs should respect children's abilities and give them the freedom to learn on their own. Intergenerational interpretation can be designed for the whole family. For example, some of the visitor center exhibit labels could be lower than the others and written for children. Interpretation designed for children might include gold panning and using a rocker, a scavenger hunt, reproduction toys and games, a coloring book with crayons, wearing period clothing, and interactive living history programs such as a period schoolroom class. A passport for children to stamp at particular buildings and sites, along with one question for each stop, is popular at other sites. Perhaps a program such as the Junior Ranger program in the national parks might be developed.

Visitors want to go inside the original buildings in Virginia City and Nevada City. The main limits to access are the small size of the buildings, visitor safety issues, and security issues. Security and public safety are concerns any time visitors are allowed to walk inside a building without staff present. Visitors might be allowed to walk unsupervised inside buildings that are empty or are only furnished with reproductions, such as a miner's cabin.

Commission staff and commissioners appear to share a common vision of what the visitor experience should be like. Visitors should be entertained and informed, and they should want to return time after time to celebrate the past and future of Virginia City and Nevada City. They should be given opportunities to understand the northern Rockies mining frontier and the evolution of Virginia City from mining boom town to a small town that is a much-loved historic attraction.

Below are several general goals for the visitor experience to Virginia City and Nevada City. *As a result of their visit to Virginia City, visitors will...*

- understand why the state purchased the properties (Virginia City is the best preserved example of an 1860s placer mining town in the Rockies, etc.).
- know that Alder Gulch was the nation's richest placer mining camp outside of California and Alaska; 10,000 people once lived and worked in the gulch.
- understand that Nevada City is basically a community created by Charlie and Sue Bovey
- go home with provocative questions, such as why so many people were willing to drop everything in order to follow the mining frontier; live in a tiny, dark cabin; and work so hard for so little return.
- feel/visualize the difference between the complexity of life in a nineteenth-century Montana town and the stereotypes we all recognize.
- have a greater understanding of the ethnic aspects of Western settlement and of the opportunities that attracted people to the West.
- tell their friends that they had fun.
- want to come back for another visit.

Recommendations:

- Hire a full-time interpretive specialist.
- Prepare and begin implementing an interpretive plan for Virginia City and Nevada City.
- Hire seasonal interpretive staff.
- Create a children's brochure that includes activities.

Options to Consider:

- The Commission should consider converting one of its buildings into a center that provides interpretive activities for children for an hour or two for a fee, essentially a specialized form of daycare. The program could include hands-on, age-appropriate activities.

- Offer visitors who arrive with bus tours the opportunity (in advance) to pay for guided walking tours. Giving the tour operators brochures or headsets for self-guided tours is another way to handle these large groups.

Different Approaches in Virginia City and Nevada City

Background: Virginia City is the “real” community along Alder Gulch today, and it is the National Historic Landmark. It has real buildings, historic fabric, and stories that are tied to specific locations in town.

Nevada City, on the other hand, can no longer be called a real town; it is instead a “collection of collections” of both buildings and artifacts. Although many visitors appreciate the “quietness” of Nevada City and comment that they enjoy its ghost town atmosphere, Nevada City is not a ghost town. Old, uninhabited buildings in a quiet setting tend to elicit a sort of Hollywood-created nostalgia in many people, and this is a valid emotion. But, this sort of experience is more appropriate to preserve and work towards at actual ghost towns such as Bannack, Montana, or Bodie, California. The many displays inside Nevada City’s buildings, including a music hall that has little to do with the history of southwestern Montana, and the undeniable presence of the tourist railroad line constructed in 1964, mean that Nevada City cannot convey the atmosphere of a real town that has been abandoned by its residents.

Guiding Principles: The Commission should emphasize the differences between Virginia City and Nevada City. This distinction needs to be made in both the interpretive content and, to some extent, in the choice of interpretive media.

In Virginia City, much of the interpretation will be tied closely to place. Specific stories about real people and actual places that exist today can be told throughout Virginia City. When talking about children in early Virginia City, for example, a walking tour guide can point to the McGovern Store and quote Mary Ronan’s description of living with her parents in that very building. Then and now photographs can be used to pique visitors’ imaginations. Artifacts found at specific sites can be exhibited. Excerpts from Alder Gulch businessmen’s letters can be displayed in their stores or quoted in walking tour brochures.

Nevada City is significant because it reflects the efforts of the Boveys to preserve buildings and artifacts from Montana’s past. This is the natural place to tell the Bovey story. But the Boveys designed Nevada City to be a “Montana treasure chest,” a representative early Montana community. So, Nevada City also lends itself to telling the story of Montana communities of the 1860s-1910s. Site-specific and building-specific history is desirable for some of the buildings in Nevada City, but it should not be over-emphasized. For example, the role of barber shops/bathing houses in small, isolated communities can be interpreted by the Hoffman Barber Shop moved to Nevada City from Elkhorn, but the details of Hoffman’s life are less relevant. The details of the community of Iron Rod and its post office building should be downplayed in favor of helping visitors understand how important letters were to early Montanans in relieving homesickness.

The focus should be on broad themes that can be conveyed to the visitors using Nevada City's buildings and artifacts, not on specific facts.

Interpretation in Nevada City should create an entertaining, sensory experience for visitors. Immerse visitors in the smells, sights, sounds, and atmosphere of an early Montana community. Use a combination of play and intellectual stimulation. Visitors should be encouraged to experience everyday life in Nevada City, bringing the past to their present through personal experience. Fun, interactive programs such as period trade demonstrations should be based in Nevada City because this type of activity is more appropriate here than in Virginia City (which is the "authentic" historic site) and because, as the sites exist today, a general admission fee can be charged more easily in Nevada City.

Some visitors will be dismayed by such changes to Nevada City, wanting it to remain the same quiet site forever; others will be delighted by the new interpretive opportunities and will take advantage of them. It is likely that some visitors will continue to visit and enjoy both communities and others will prefer one over the other.

Interpretive Time Period

Background: The significance of Virginia City extends well beyond the story of its early years, even though those years are the ones generally emphasized in previous studies and in the National Register and National Historic Landmark nominations. Virginia City combined with Nevada City offers excellent opportunities to interpret the full socioeconomic, technological, and environmental implications of the northern Rockies mining frontier, from the communities established during Alder Gulch's bright beginnings to decades of economic decline to revitalization as historic sites. They also illustrate how private, local, state, and federal efforts have joined to transform Virginia City and Nevada City into symbols of western historic preservation.

Neither site lends itself to interpretation of a narrow period of time. The buildings and artifacts date from many different decades, most after 1875. There are too many modern intrusions such as highway traffic to provide a true "immersion" experience in a particular era, particularly in Virginia City.

Guiding Principles: Choosing a short time period to interpret in either Virginia City or Nevada City would tell an incomplete story, would be limiting, and would generally be untenable for the resources that are at hand. The layers of history shown in many of the buildings is a fascinating story in and of itself, and the historic fabric dating from one period should not be destroyed to take a building back to an earlier period. The Commission should emphasize the layers of history; the overlay of dates and periods underlines the richness of the history interpreted here. Use various interpretive media – historic photographs, models, GIS maps with overlays – to help visitors envision how particular buildings or the entire site appeared in the past.

The interpretive time period in both Virginia City and Nevada City is broad. Change over time, layers, and trends will be emphasized over particular moments in time. The broad time period allows interpretation to draw on many experiences, events, artifacts, and buildings to develop programs and to attract visitors. It allows for programs to change, keeping regional visitors from becoming jaded.

In Virginia City, the primary interpretive time period is 1863 through 1942. This goes from its founding until the start of World War II, when the last burst of mining activity during the historic period was shut down. The work of the Boveys in Virginia City is quite evident in the form of reconstructed and remodeled buildings, the train, and the furnished building displays. This aspect of Virginia City's history needs to be explained to visitors, so this extends the interpretive period much closer to the present. Over the years, however, the Commission should work to shift the Bovey story as much as possible to Nevada City, which is the focus for that story.

The period for interpreting the generic Montana community aspect of Nevada City is 1863 until the 1910s. The period for interpreting the Bovey story in Nevada City is 1941 until 1997. Both are important aspects of the interpretive program in Nevada City, and the Commission should strive to convey the themes related to each of these topics to all visitors.

Interpretive Themes

Background: Interpretation must have themes and be organized around these themes. Interpreters should use the interpretive themes as tools to develop programs and interpretive materials, including furnished building displays, walking tours and brochures, period trades, exhibits, and special events. The current interpretation at both sites is fragmented, is not organized around themes, and includes many dates, names, and locations. Without linkages to show relationships, this information is meaningless and overwhelming to the visitor. A good theme can make information relevant, personal, and meaningful.

Guiding Principles: The Alder Gulch story has many nuances and spans over 130 years of history. Visitors need help in organizing how to spend their time and how to approach the historical information available to them. Interpretive programs should offer an integrated message. They should connect, not segment, key aspects of the story. Once Alder Gulch has been placed firmly in a regional and even national context, then more specialized programming and options that provide details about a particular piece of the story will make sense to visitors.

Themes are the main point or message that is being conveyed about a particular topic or subject. The topic is the subject matter, and it can be used to illustrate several themes. Many, many topics are suited to the resources in Virginia City and Nevada City and are well documented. These include topics such as *communications, transportation, mining technology, race and ethnic relations, architecture, business life, the reasons people came to Alder Gulch, family relations, tourism over the decades, community life, and*

many others. Any of these can convey and illustrate the messages contained in the historic themes. Information on these topics are the raw material for creating interpretive programs that emphasize patterns and themes, connections and meaning, and connections with other sites. Use the indexed bibliography for Virginia City (McKay 1999) as a starting point to find information on particular topics. Ask: what ideas do you want visitors to take away with them? All interpretive services – talks, exhibits, publications, videos, etc. – should present five or fewer main ideas. The presentation should have a beginning, an end, and a message. The program needs to answer the question, “So what?”

These are the proposed interpretive themes for the state-owned properties at Alder Gulch:

Overarching theme: Alder Gulch and the community of Virginia City played a vital role on the northern Rockies mining frontier. The area evolved over time to something quite different from its boom period.

Subthemes

- Virginia City exemplifies the challenges, conflicts, and successes encountered in remote Western mining communities in commerce, society, culture, government, transportation, communications, and architecture.
- Virginia City and its people were unique and fascinating, but they – and the local ethnic, race, and class issues - were also representative of the evolving northern Rockies mining frontier.
- Alder Gulch has been shaped and reshaped by miners and their technology.
- Nevada City is essentially a created town that provides an excellent example of an early and continuing commitment to historic preservation.
- Montana’s early communities developed along somewhat predictable lines based on the aspirations of their residents and on their location in relation to natural resources and transportation routes.

These themes help organize the specific content of Virginia City and Nevada City’s major stories. The stories may be tied to multiple buildings, mining and other landscape features, or artifacts. Organizing the interpretive message around these themes provides a framework for interpreting particular topics of great interest to visitors, such as the Vigilantes, territorial government, mining, business life, and the Boveys. Visitors should leave Alder Gulch understanding that its development is similar to that of many other gold-bearing gulches in the northern Rockies.

The story of Alder Gulch should be told in the state, national, and world context. This cannot be emphasized enough. Events in Alder Gulch had effects around the world, and the reverse was also true. Information about local events should be placed within the bigger picture. So, for example, interpretation of the Chinese living in Alder Gulch should address the conditions in Kwangtung that led so many Chinese from that region to

emigrate to North America. It should also mention the ways in which the Chinese experience in Alder Gulch was similar to (and maybe different from) their experiences in other locations in western North America.

Prehistory, natural history, and the ranching and farming history of the area may be addressed in interpretation in Virginia City and Nevada City, but they are not of primary significance to the themes identified above and are not as closely tied to the resources. They should be interpreted in terms of how they relate to the primary themes. For example, the growth of area ranching can be described as a predictable result of a mining boom. The birds and the fish in the wetlands and ponds created by dams might be mentioned when discussing the impact of mining on the natural environment.

Through the interpretive planning process, the Commission needs to identify the following categories of buildings:

- 1) Buildings whose displays should be retained more or less in their current condition. These include displays with furnishings that are almost entirely original to that building, such as the McGovern Store, the Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop, the E. L. Smith Store, and the barber shop from Elkhorn. Also included in this category are displays in Nevada City that should be retained as representative examples of the Boveys' work, such as the Cheap Cash store.
- 2) Other buildings that should have furnished building displays, and the subject and period they should represent.
- 3) Buildings that should have interpretive exhibits, and the topics they should cover.
- 4) Buildings and outdoor spaces that serve best as space for concessionaires.
- 5) Buildings and outdoor spaces that serve best for period trades.
- 6) Buildings that are best used for administrative purposes, such as employee housing, office space, shop facility, and storage.
- 7) Outdoor spaces that should have wayside exhibits.

This process should be fairly flexible, as needs will undoubtedly change over time. The main consideration is to move slowly, changing the displays in only one or two buildings a year, but to be guided by a well-thought-out overall plan and goal.

As an example, say that it is decided that Content's Corner is the most appropriate place to interpret the territorial government period. One room could have an interpretive exhibit giving the political background and placing Virginia City's role as a territorial capital in the larger picture. If enough information is available, one room might be furnished as it would have looked during the territorial capital period. A walking tour brochure guiding visitors to other sites related to the territorial government could be

available in this building and in the visitor center. Visitors interested in this topic could then move on to related resources, such as the Potts House, Bonanza Inn, Stonewall Hall, the Capitol site, Meagher's House, the county courthouse, and the territorial arsenal. The interpretation given in the brochure (and on guided walks on the territorial government period) would tie this topic in to one or more of the historic themes for the sites.

As another example, the River of Gold Mining Museum and the mining landscape around it are the best place to tell the story of mining's impact on the landscape. Appropriate media for sharing the story with visitors might include wayside exhibits and guided walking tours about mining-related artifacts and the landscape. Nevada City, on the other hand, is the best place to tell the Bovey story. In this case, many interpretive media can combine to cover the topic effectively. A similar approach could be used for other topics, such as transportation, business, Vigilantes, and architecture.

Recommendation:

- Incorporate interpretive themes into all existing interpretive programs and publications.

Visitor Center

Background: Visitor centers at historic sites perform two key functions. They help visitors plan their time at the site, and they introduce the site's stories and provide a comprehensive overview so visitors can more fully understand, experience, and enjoy their visit. Good signage and exhibits and well-trained and out-going staff can best offer this type of service. Most visitors need to feel comfortable with an unfamiliar environment, so basic orientation to Virginia City and Nevada City is very important. Until visitor needs such as restrooms, food, water, and shelter are met, visitors are usually not interested in interpretation.

In 2000, the Commission established its visitor center in the Virginia City railroad depot, a building moved in by Charlie Bovey. It was open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.. The north end of the building houses exhibits, a video viewing area, and an information desk. The south end houses the museum store and the railroad ticket sales operation. The 1,750-square-foot building has the advantage of being located close to the core historic area of lower Wallace Street and at one end of the train ride. It also has an adjacent newly developed parking area that holds some 250 vehicles.

The visitor center contains a static exhibit that gives an overview of the history of Alder Gulch and its nine communities through the use of historic photographs and explanatory labels. Montana State University architecture students are building a scale model (1" = 8') of the historic core of Virginia City that will show approximately 80 buildings, both those that still stand today and those that are no longer there. This large display will take up much of the room in the building.

The Commission has prepared a 13-minute video that will be shown in the visitor center beginning in the 2001 season. This video provides information on the history of the area (including preservation efforts), the railroad, and some visitor orientation to the two sites. Period harmonica and music machine music, and excerpts from the writings of early Virginia City residents, help make it lively and interesting to viewers. It does not provide much larger context, however. The current viewing area is small; it is not large enough, for example, to hold a bus tour group at one time.

The existing sign directing people to the visitor center is located under large shade trees and is often completely blocked from view by parked vehicles.

Guiding Principles: It is currently difficult for visitors to understand the full range of opportunities in Virginia City and Nevada City and the best order in which to see the various attractions. The people working in the visitor center play an important role in making visitors feel welcome and that they have made the right decision in visiting the area. When faced with choices and poor orientation, visitors can fail to make the best use of their limited time and leave unsatisfied or with a disjointed impression of the sites' stories. Efficient orientation is crucial to a positive visitor experience. This can occur on-site or before the visitor arrives. Options should be presented in straightforward formats.

The person at the information desk and site brochures can help visitors design their own easy-to-follow schedule of activity. The staffperson should initiate conversation with visitors who walk into the building by asking, for example, whether it's their first visit to the area. After welcoming them, he or she should then let them know what is available for them to do and see that day, with some adjustment for weather and the composition and time availability of the group. This person should be prepared to answer questions about visiting the state-owned sites, other attractions in the area, and the history of the area, including specific buildings. The desk on the north end of the visitor center, the official "visitor center" desk, should always be staffed during the hours the building is open.

Some of the topics visitors ask about in Commission visitor center:

- Interpretive opportunities,
- Services such as restrooms, souvenir shops, churches, banks, phones
- Theater programs
- Items for purchase (including publications on area)
- Nearby attractions
- Seasonal weather (and appropriate film to use)
- Food and lodging
- Vehicle services
- Local outfitters and guides
- Distances and directions to other locations
- Cultural history of the area
- Natural history of the area
- Emergency services

The Commission should prepare a weekly schedules of events during the summer season. The schedule should be given to every group that enters the visitor center (advertising by

local businesses might help pay for the printing). Make sure these schedules are available throughout Virginia City and Nevada City and nearby communities. List guided walking tours, period craft demonstrations, street theater, special exhibits, archaeology sites, train schedule, stagecoach rides and other driving tours, evening talks, hours museums are open, and any other scheduled activities or on-going attractions, including events not sponsored by the Commission. It should also include a map of Virginia City and Nevada City showing visitor facilities such as the visitor center, restaurants, lodging, restrooms, public phones, handicapped access, theaters, railroad depots, driving tour pick-up points, museums, and businesses. Historic sites (both state-owned properties and other attractions such as museums and historical monuments) should be highlighted on the map. The visitor center should be prominently identified on this and every map published by the Commission. This brochure and other appropriate publications should be available in a dispenser outside the visitor center for visitors arriving after hours and off-season.

Both the visitor center and the parking area should be well signed on-site, perhaps including the international graphic symbols for information and parking. Additional signs directing people to the visitor center should be placed at the east approach to Virginia City and at the west approach to Nevada City (so far, the Montana Department of Transportation has not cooperated with this idea). These signs should be consistent with all other Commission signs to help establish an identity for the site.

The visitor center exhibits should use interpretive media to tell the story of Alder Gulch in a way that the buildings and artifacts alone cannot. Appropriate topics include the national and international economic and political background, the mining operations, and human use of Alder Gulch before the mining rush. This reduces the need for potentially obtrusive on-site interpretation and gives visitors a sense of the bigger picture. The exhibits should be interactive so as to engage and involve families and children. Historic photographs, taped interviews with old-timers, artists' drawings, overlay maps, quiz boards, artifacts, and reproductions can all be effective. Encourage visitors to pick up a 20-pound bag of beans, for example, and think about how they would get it to a cabin up at Summit in the 1860s. Have a "mystery table" containing unlabeled items that visitors can pick up and handle with a sign asking visitors what the objects are (the answers can be given on labels on the bottom of the items or on a list kept behind the desk). Interpretive waysides might be located on the back porch of the visitor center, where visitors often look out over Alder Creek. These panels could talk about the visible remains of mining.

Computers should probably not be included in plans for the current visitor center. The presence of such obviously modern technology would perhaps be jarring and is not a high priority for the next several years in meeting the Commission's interpretive goals. A computer available in a separate location for research, however, would be appropriate.

In partnership with the city, the Commission should provide standard visitor facilities throughout as much of the year as possible. These include accessible restrooms, convenient parking, telephones, lodging, garbage cans, benches, and places to eat. Make

sure that a map of visitor services along the corridor and perhaps covering a larger area is available to all visitors.

Visitors like to shop, and providing more opportunities for shopping tends to help all the businesses on Wallace Street. The museum store needs to balance the goals of interpretation, turning a profit, and not competing directly with private businesses. Visitors whose curiosity has been provoked by their visit should be able to purchase and take home publications that offer more detailed information. Books, videos, postcards, slides, CD-ROMs, CDs and cassette tapes, brochures, maps, posters, calendars, and other publications related to western community and business life, mining, architecture, people associated with Alder Gulch, historic preservation, and material culture are all appropriate. Books on the natural history of the area and on other sites of interest to travelers throughout the region might be appropriate. Items that are spin-offs of interpretive programs, such as goods produced by period craft demonstrators, a book telling how the town was restored (with many before and after photographs), the orientation video, and videos of guided tours, are quite appropriate. Reprints of historic photographs in the Montana Historical Society collection might be a source of revenue.

The museum store should sell items over a range of prices, including small items that children like to take home as souvenirs. Items other than publications should be evaluated for their relevance to the themes of the sites. Items related to railroads are not appropriate for the Virginia City museum store, but they are appropriate for sale in Nevada City as a tie-in to the Boveys' introduction of the Alder Gulch Short Line to the area. The production of licensed reproductions of selected items should be explored; aim for a high-quality product with wide appeal. The Commission should receive a percentage of the wholesale cost. If any antiques are sold, it should be clear that they are not from the collection. Appropriate items produced by the Virginia City Preservation Alliance could be sold in the museum store. A bookseller might be a concessionaire inside the museum store, or the Montana Historical Society might again wish to operate a Virginia City outlet.

The current arrangement of the museum store does not encourage visitors to initiate contact with the staff; the sales desk is behind a high counter with thick vertical dowels blocking all but the sales window. Remove the large bench in the center of the retail area. This is retail/visitor center space, not a waiting room, and every square foot of this small space should be used effectively for either displaying items for sale, for interpretation, or for visitor orientation.

The current visitor center building is already not large enough, and it is not a comfortable place for many visitors, particularly the elderly. Some years from now, a visitor center could be established either in a different historic building or in a new facility. There is no one logical place for a visitor center serving Virginia City and Nevada City, since there are two sites and visitors approach from either the east or the west. A new visitor center might be located between the curatorial center and the Virginia City depot. Or, somewhere in the Central City vicinity (along the corridor between Virginia City and Nevada City) is a possibility, with a train stop, shuttles, parking, and access from the

highway. If a new building is constructed, it should not be built within the historic core area of Virginia City unless it is an exact replica of an earlier building on that site, nor should it compete with or detract from the view from Wallace Street and Boot Hill of the historic buildings and landscape features. Another option is having several satellite visitor centers in both Virginia City and Nevada City rather than one large building.

Nevada City could also use a visitor center. The best location there might be the train depot. This is probably the best place to have an exhibit on the history of tourism and preservation work in Virginia City and Nevada City. The Bovey story can be emphasized here, encouraging visitors to walk across the highway and enter Nevada City.

When planning for a new visitor center, the Commission should consider whether it is desirable that it contain other functions as well, such as an education center, administrative offices, or reference library. Alternative locations should be carefully studied, taking into account such possibilities as the relocating of the Highway 287.

Recommendations:

- Prepare and distribute a weekly schedule of events.
- Post a large sign inside the visitor center that lists all the videos that are available for viewing, with their length. If the orientation video is shown on demand rather than continuously, have a staffperson welcome visitors at the start of the video and return to answer questions or provide directions at the end.
- Install interactive exhibits such as a "mystery table" in the visitor center.
- Make sure that all items sold in the museum store in the visitor center relate to the interpretive themes of the sites. Relocate the railroad-related items in the museum store to Nevada City.
- Redesign the interior space of the museum store.
- Consider relocating the visitor center (not an immediate priority).

Options to Consider:

- Construct a year-round orientation/information board outside the visitor center. This should include a map of the area highlighting historic sites and visitor services. A welcome and introduction to the state-owned properties, along with resource protection and safety messages, should also be included. A brief introduction to the historic themes might be provided. A space for people to leave messages for others could be included. A brochure box with a sign asking for donations could be adjacent or attached to this bulletin board.

- Establish a place near the visitor center and the parking area for occasional period demonstrations and special outdoor programs.
- A water fountain, picnic tables with shade, and a place for pets might be provided near the visitor center.
- Consider putting phones (perhaps even replica pre-World War II wall telephones) in kiosks or other locations in Virginia City and Nevada City for visitors to use to call the visitor center for information.
- Put in appropriate historic playground equipment near the visitor center, such as a swing.
- Distribute for free or for a nominal fee a well-produced brochure or newspaper that provides relatively detailed information on the sites. Expanding on the overview walking tour brochures, this publication could give more detailed information on buildings, building preservation work, curation, interpretive themes and topics, artifacts, period trades, and other subjects of interest to visitors.

Furnished Building Displays

General principles

Background: The Boveys loved to create furnished building displays in order to display the artifacts they collected. These displays allow the artifacts to be shown in context and give the feeling that the proprietor or occupant has just stepped out of the building. This approach distinguishes Virginia City and Nevada City from sites like Bannack State Park, which preserve the abandoned ghost town appearance. They Boveys allowed the artifacts and buildings to speak (or not speak) for themselves, with minimal interpretation. The Boveys tended to furnish buildings by imposing their ideas of how things might have looked, but their concepts did not always reflect reality. The interpretation was based on nostalgia rather than on historic themes.

The Commission currently manages just under 100 interior building displays. Visitors are kept from entering the buildings by a variety of physical barriers, from picket fences to Plexiglas.

Guiding Principles: The displays need a great deal of work to reach their full interpretive potential. They currently are deteriorating badly. The goal should be to preserve most of the displays, with some modifications, and aim for them to appear as if the occupant of the building had just left, not like they have been long abandoned.

Many of the displays are currently overcrowded. Rotating objects between display and storage will reduce the crowding and at the same time allow for preventive conservation

on these artifacts. In addition, having so many artifacts in each display makes it difficult for people to grasp the big picture; they tend to focus in on items of particular interest.

Artificial lighting, subtle and of the type that minimizes damage to artifacts, should be considered for some of the building displays. In determining which buildings need supplemental lighting, historic authenticity should be kept in mind; in other words, many store interiors would have been dimly lit during the daytime prior to World War II. Even so, a display is not conveying much of a message if it cannot be seen by a visitor standing in the doorway.

Currently, many of the displays contain artifacts from many decades. This confuses the story (and the visitor) because items that would never have shared the same space historically do so in the displays. Each display's story needs to be carefully defined, usually focusing on a relatively short time span. It should be remembered, however, that it is essentially impossible to restore a structure and its contents to a precise moment in time, because the past is much too complex for this. Residences, for example, change their appearance daily. The occupants of many of Virginia City's business buildings changed frequently, as did their uses.

Furnishing buildings accurately requires a great deal of research to determine what would have been appropriate for the setting and the period. The furnishings should not be based on what is available in the collection. For example, having many bird cages in the collection does not necessarily mean that every residence should have one on display. Similarly, the large number of women's formal dresses in the collection does not necessarily mean that a dressmaker's shop is an appropriate display for Virginia City (although it might be for Nevada City).

Some buildings that still are furnished with original artifacts – the “time capsules” – could benefit from furnishing studies. These would discuss the furnishings of the building room by room, the historic uses, and structural modifications. Furnishings would include woodwork, lighting fixtures, wallpaper, window dressing, furniture, accessories, and wall hangings. Documented and added furnishings would be listed with recommendations as to which should remain and which should not. Furnishing studies might also be useful for some of the other displays. The report could include recommendations based on decorative schemes and furnishings used by Montanans during the period to be interpreted. Recommendations might include information such as this: if a letter press is displayed it should have a porcelain water bowl for copying press rushes hanging near it.

The Boveys put mannequins in some of the building displays in Virginia City but none in Nevada City. These mannequins are static and become a focus of attention, particularly as they deteriorate. The mannequins generally have hair styles, makeup, and expressions that do not match the intended interpretive period of the displays. The current mannequins need to be cleaned and repaired or else replaced. It is suggested that the Commission remove them from the displays. If this is done, some of the mannequins,

particularly the favorites with locals and staff, should be saved for use in an exhibit on the Boveys' work. Perhaps they could be used in an exhibit displaying costumes.

Reproductions and artifacts and landscaping can be used effectively to create the impression that a furnished building display is alive. For example, leave children's toys on porches of residences, fill woodboxes with wood or kindling, place games and photograph albums out on a table in a parlor, scatter pens and papers on a desk, hang a sheet-metal bathtub on the outside of a building, establish gardens and compost piles, and build a clothesline outside a dwelling. Laminate a reproduction sheet of a period newspaper for visitors to pick up and read (this could be a Chinese newspaper in the Chinese area in Nevada City, with an English translation on the back). These details fuel visitors' imagination. Such objects communicate values and details about ordinary people that are crucial to the visitor experience.

The information inherent in the buildings, the artifacts, and the spaces should be allowed to come through. Currently most of the displays have no interpretation at all beyond what is in the walking tour brochures and on the National Register plaques. Labels and words should be used sparingly in interpreting furnished building displays. They should serve primarily as signposts that help the visitor grasp the nonverbal experience offered by the site. On the inside of original buildings that are open to the public, historic photographs of the exterior and interior of the building, and a chart showing the uses and occupants of the building over time, would be of interest to some visitors. Interpretive signs could describe a few of the artifacts that are in view. Some building displays as they exist currently do need some interpretive signing to explain them, such as the assay office in Virginia City.

Visitors would prefer not to view or photograph the interiors through safety glass, Plexiglas, or cage barriers. Wooden fences combined with infrared motion-detector alarms might be the least obtrusive method of providing security to the artifacts in furnished building displays. Access inside some buildings, such as stores, might be increased by setting up barriers that allow visitors to walk all the way down the aisle, and interpretive panels could be placed along the barriers. Plexiglas barriers are excellent for security and dust protection, but they do prevent photographs unless "camera openings" are provided. Chicken wire or large-mesh pig wire might be a less glaringly modern alternative to Plexiglas, and it might be more camera-friendly, depending on the size of the mesh.

Access inside buildings that meet life safety codes might be provided by stationing interpreters inside the building at advertised hours of the day or by offering guided tours that originate at the visitor center and go inside one or more building interiors. The number of visitors per tour should be limited to the number that can fit inside the building(s) and that can be supervised by the interpreter. Valuable artifacts might be relocated to the rear of the building displays. The buildings that are open should be rotated to reduce the wear and tear on them and to provide variety in the programming.

As the collection is inventoried and the Interpretive Plan is developed, possible new furnished building displays may be identified for both Virginia City and Nevada City. These are some ideas for appropriate future furnished building displays in Virginia City, if the artifacts and necessary information are available: *territorial government offices or meeting hall, saloon, bank, drugstore, house museum, commercial living quarters, furniture store, theater, men's social club or literary society, bakery, Chinese boarding house, morgue, servants' quarters, liquor warehouse, surveyor's office, bathhouse, tailor, telegraph office, hurdy-gurdy hall, music teacher's home, men's clothing store, restaurant, and hotel.*

Since Nevada City is primarily a created town, the options are wide open, including most of the above plus: *carpenter's shop, dance hall, brothel, stable, and butcher shop. Wall tents, wickiups, dugouts, and wagons* could be built to house displays of early dwellings and businesses. Nevada City also lends itself to replica period playground equipment (a swing used to be located near the school and was quite popular).

Some of the buildings in both communities may be used for interpretive displays rather than displays furnished with artifacts. For example, a miner's cabin in Nevada City might be furnished with reproduction items, and visitors might be allowed inside at scheduled times or in the company of a roving interpreter.

Recommendations:

- Determine which furnished building displays in each community should be retained essentially as is as "time capsules."
- Remove all mannequins from furnished building displays.
- Once interpretive plan has been written, eliminate displays that do not meet interpretive goals.
- Once interpretive plan has been written, create new displays based on interpretive themes, buildings, and artifacts.
- Increase visitor access to building interiors by establishing new barriers, by stationing interpreters inside buildings, or by offering guided walking tours inside buildings.

Options to Consider:

- Consider using reproductions to fill artifact gaps.
- Consider incorporating the following specific recommendations for existing displays in the interpretive plan:

Pittman's Gas Station: Some buildings are clearly not maximizing their interpretive potential. One of these is Pittman's Gas Station, which currently houses the deteriorating "Rocky Mountain Telephone Company" display created by the Boveys in 1972 for an advertisement. This building was constructed ca. 1919 as an office for a gas station. The owner built it of salvaged material from an 1860s building to make it look like it dated from the gold-rush era. This building could house an exhibit on early tourism in the area, on the impact of the automobile on Virginia City, and on the declining fortunes of Virginia City in the early 1900s. Other early tourism-related sites would be historic monuments, the Hangman's Building, the Thompson-Hickman Museum, Boot Hill, and the Montana Post building.

Cabbage Patch: The so-called Cabbage Patch buildings, which are really the Driggs Outbuildings built in the 1870s, contain a poorly maintained recreation of a red-light district created by Bovey employee Zena Hoff. These would be better interpreted as outbuildings. They can tell a story about the necessity for specialized outbuildings in early Montana communities. The building sided with flattened kerosene cans is a particularly good example of the re-use of materials in isolated communities. The story of prostitution can be told better in a different building, perhaps one that actually was used by prostitutes.

Goldberg/McGovern Store and Weston Hotel: This building has many fascinating stories to tell. The east part, which today houses the McGovern Store, is one of the truly evocative "time capsules" in Virginia City. It reportedly is furnished exactly as it was when the McGovern sisters closed their store in the 1940s. The outdated inventory highlights the lack of business after the turn of the century. This part of the building should be kept just as it is, perhaps with copies of the two historic photographs of the store interior placed where visitors can compare the images to the current appearance. The "Out to Lunch" sign that hung on the door for many years could be replaced. This building was also the childhood home of Mary Ronan. Her published recollections contain good stories that can be tied to this site.

The west six feet of the building housed the Weston Hotel by approximately 1866. Currently, a dentist's office display is in the front room. This display should be relocated to Nevada City, unless the dentist's office display has associations with Virginia City. Perhaps this narrow section of the building could house a small exhibit on architectural layering, one that encourages visitors to look at the west side of the nearby Kramer Building to see its many-layered roof. Visitors could also be encouraged to imagine what it would be like to stay in such a hotel.

Strasburger's Colorado Store and LaBeau's Jewelry Store: The east part of Strasburger's Colorado Store now houses a jewelry store display, and the west side houses a tobacco shop display. Historically, the building was a men's clothing store and then a residence. Next door is the LaBeau Jewelry Store, which today houses part of Sue Bovey's toy collection in the form of a toy store display. This building served as a dwelling, jewelry store, doctor's office, and hotel over the years.

These two buildings would be more effectively interpreted if the toy display were removed (there probably was never a toy store in Virginia City). The toys might better be displayed in Nevada City. The jewelry store display could then be moved into LaBeau's Jewelry Store, matching one of its historic uses. The east part of Strasburger's store, if it meets code, might then be used for an exhibit on Jews and other ethnic and racial groups who lived and worked in Alder Gulch (Strasburger was Jewish, and his reminiscences and other sources are available).

The tobacco shop display is in very poor condition and should be completely cleaned up or else replaced with a different building display or an exhibit.

Kramer Building/Dress Shop: The Kramer Building served as a blacksmith, a saddlery, and a dwelling during the historic period. It currently houses a dress shop display, with items of clothing on display ranging from the 1870s through the 1950s and mannequins with 1940s-60s makeup and wigs. The dress shop display is probably not appropriate for this site, unless there was a dress shop in Virginia City in a period that matches the clothing in the collection. The display should be relocated to Nevada City, and it should be completely re-worked so that it represents a dress shop of a particular period. The textiles and other furnishings should be evaluated individually for their appropriateness in the display, and the overall arrangement of a dress shop of the selected period should be researched and replicated.

This building might better be interpreted as a dwelling. At least one building on lower Wallace Street should represent a family or single person's residence. And/or, it could be used for an exhibit on the Chinese in Virginia City – the building was owned by Ah Yow from 1875-81.

Fairweather Inn: The Fairweather Inn is currently a concession that provides hotel lodging to visitors. The 1862 building has evolved from a one-story building with a false front through various remodelings and additions to a two-story structure with east wing and a two-story porch. Over the years, the building housed a restaurant, butcher shop, saloon, hotel, and boarding house for dredge workers. In 1946, Bovey opened it as a hotel. Historic photographs and labels might tell this story effectively in the lobby, or a special brochure detailing the history of this building might be prepared to give to hotel guests and other interested visitors. The room furnished with period furniture that is off-limits to visitors might be redone with appropriate reproductions reflecting a particular period, and guests could be allowed to use the room as a sitting room.

Chinatown Area in Nevada City: The Chinatown area of Nevada City was built by Bovey in 1972. The extensive Chinese collection, mostly from several buildings in Butte, should be better displayed and interpreted. This group of buildings and artifacts should be evaluated as a whole and redone. One of the buildings could house an exhibit putting the Chinese in Alder Gulch in the larger context. Perhaps the temple display should be moved into the temple replica. The vacant buildings – "opium den," smokehouse, and

bachelor's cabin – should be furnished or interpreted in some way. The opium den, in particular, could benefit from good interpretation.

Nevada City Music Hall: The music machines, tools, and parts in Nevada City were purchased by Charlie Bovey in New York and moved to Nevada City. They are not associated with Alder Gulch. Most date from ca. 1895 through the late 1920s. The player pianos date until the 1930s. Most are housed in a 1910 recreation hall from Yellowstone National Park. This specialized collection is an interesting part of the Bovey story and should be interpreted as such.

Visitors, especially children, love to make the machines play. This provides a small amount of revenue for the Commission. This practice should be continued, although perhaps fewer machines should be available for playing at any one time, if it is determined that use is detrimental to them. Tokens of a lower denomination than the \$5 tokens already for sale by the Commission might be minted to operate with the music machines.

The overall purpose of the music machine display should be determined. Some hard questions need to be asked. Is it the mission of the Commission to care for, maintain, and display every one of the machines that the Boveys collected? What will it cost to preserve these machines? What is the interpretive message? Should only a representative sample be accessioned in order to tell the Bovey story, and the rest sold or traded?

Nevada City Schoolhouse: This building is a good example of a display that confuses observant visitors. According to the walking tour brochure, the building was constructed in Twin Bridges in 1867. The date written on the blackboard reads 1864, the flag flying in front is a 48-star flag, and some of the books appear to date from the 1900s. The appropriate period of interpretation should be decided on and then the artifacts chosen accordingly. This building might better be furnished with reproduction or “expendable” artifacts and used as a classroom for participatory living history programs.

Thematic Interpretive Exhibits

Background: The only interpretive exhibit in the state-owned properties currently is the exhibit in the Virginia City visitor center. Several museums in Virginia City not associated with the Commission offer historical attractions to visitors. One is the Thompson-Hickman Museum, owned by Madison County and operated by the Vigilance Club (the public library is on the second floor of this building). The Virginia City-Madison County Museum, also on Wallace Street, is operated by a private non-profit organization. Both of these museums have been open for decades, and they display many artifacts associated with Alder Gulch as well as documents and historic photographs. The 1875 county courthouse is open to the public. The Hangman's Building has a small but growing exhibit area. Some sites, such as the Masonic Lodge with its 1867 furnishings, are opened to visitors on special occasions.

Possible new interpretive exhibits:

- **The story of the Boveys' preservation work in Nevada City and Virginia City, with some information on pre-Bovey tourism and the Commission, in comparison with other mining camps**
- **Myth-busting (here are ten myths we think you believe...here is the reality)**
- **How and by whom log and frame buildings were constructed (inside a building in Nevada City)**
- **Well-known residents of Alder Gulch**
- **Gilbert Brewery (brewing process, economics, Prohibition)**
- **Changing fashions (or, clothing that did not sell)**
- **Display in a vacant lot describing Virginia City's function as an outfitting center for miners and for Yellowstone tourists**
- **Rotating exhibits, such as ones on stores and the international trade network, women of Alder Gulch, or recent mining activity**

mixed with non-interactive exhibits.

Guiding Principles: Thematic exhibits, like other interpretive media, should spark the visitor's imagination and communicate themes but not tell the whole story in great detail. The text, graphics, and artifacts should be packaged by themes or whole ideas; specific topics such as Chinese residents of Virginia City should be used to illustrate the themes. Visitors can move through exhibits at their own pace, choosing the amount of detail they wish to absorb.

Thematic exhibits usually combine artifacts or reproductions, graphics, and art with interpretive text and photographs to communicate directly on a given topic without lengthy explanation. The best exhibits are enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic. They should be visually appealing – colorful and three-dimensional – and not use a lot of words (in fact, many people read only the titles). There might be two tiers of exhibit labels – ones that can be read quickly, and ones with smaller print for those who want more information. In fact, current exhibit design theory states that visitors with three different levels of interest should be accommodated: those willing to spend 3 seconds reading an interpretive label, those willing to spend 30 seconds, and those willing to spend 3 minutes reading detailed information.

Examples, analogies, and comparisons help link the explanations to things visitors already know or care about. Interactive exhibits, such as quiz boards, mechanical exhibits, and tactile exhibits, can be quite effective when

The visitor center's interpretive exhibit can be expanded. Exhibits in the visitor center should tell stories difficult to tell on-site, expose visitors to background information, and encourage them to explore the stories further on-site. Some topics, such as American Indian and fur trader use of the area, do not tie in well to the buildings and artifacts or lend themselves to living history and would be better interpreted in the visitor center.

Some thematic exhibits might serve to orient visitors to the Commission properties and also entice them to stay longer and see more of the sites.

There is some concern about whether or not it is appropriate to install interpretive exhibits in existing historic buildings, because modern exhibit formats can be jarring inside a historic building. The exhibits do not need to be high-tech to be successful, however. The exhibit's content should make effective use of the building in which it is located. Some exhibits could be installed in outbuildings ranging in size from outhouses to barns.

Two examples of appropriate thematic exhibits are as follows. One is an exhibit on the Boveys' work in Virginia City and Nevada City, perhaps located in the train depot or in the music hall. It would be best not to put this display in Virginia City, since Nevada City is the focus for interpretation of the Bovey story. Another is an exhibit on "myths" about life in Alder Gulch and northern Rockies mining camps in general. Topics covered might include social complexities and class relations, international mining finance and sources of supply, and passion for schools. The exhibit could include a section on films that have been shot in Nevada City and Virginia City; perhaps clips from some of these films could even be shown.

Recommendations:

- Install new thematic exhibits based on the interpretive plan, once it is prepared.
- Prepare and implement exhibit plan for River of Gold Museum.
- Establish an area for changing exhibits. This provides an opportunity to build community and regional involvement.

Options to Consider:

- Consider bringing in traveling exhibits and even, down the road, preparing exhibits to go out on loan to other museums and historic sites.

Self-guided and Guided Tours

Background: Self-guided and guided tours of Virginia City and Nevada City are the way most visitors currently experience the two sites. These tours generally provide an overview history with details on particular buildings. The current two walking tour brochures were printed with Montana Accommodations Tax Funds for free distribution. They provide overview information on most of the significant buildings and sites in each community (63 in Virginia City and 36 in Nevada City) and are not organized around specific topics or themes.

The Boveys printed and distributed a promotional brochure aimed at attracting people to visit Virginia City. It listed visitor services but provided little historical information. The Boveys' curator wrote and designed a pamphlet on Nevada City that the Boveys authorized. The curator and another individual paid for the printing themselves and then sold the brochures to visitors to recoup the printing fees. This brochure formed the basis of the current Nevada City brochure.

Self-guided tours, in the form of walking tour brochures, are less costly than guided walks and are available many more hours. The number of buildings covered in brochures can be fairly large, as it is currently, because visitors can simply walk past or not visit ones that are not of interest to them.

Many residences and business buildings are being restored. Many of the privately owned buildings in Virginia City display National Register plaques that give a paragraph of information on the history of the building.

Guiding Principles: There is great potential in both Virginia City and Nevada City for topical self-guided and guided walking tours.

Good tours are interpretive and entertaining, present meaningful and relevant information, and are well organized around a central topic with five or fewer main ideas. They do not simply identify sites. They are tied to place; there are clear relationships between the stops on the tour and its topic. The stops together tell a story or make a point that is related to one or more of the identified themes for the site. For example, a tour that focuses on the Vigilantes and the evolution of law and order on the mining frontier might start at the Dance & Stuart Store and visit various other places with associations to the road agents and Vigilantes, such as the McGovern/Goldberg Store, a residence of one of the Vigilantes, the Hangman's Building, and the Madison County Courthouse. The discussion should contrast and compare the Vigilante movement in Montana with other areas such as California. General background on the town in 1863 and 1864 should be provided, using existing buildings and landscape as illustrations. The subtheme that should be emphasized throughout is the one that states that Virginia City exemplifies the challenges, conflicts, and successes encountered in remote Western mining communities in government and other areas of life. The interpreter should encourage visitors to visit related sites, such as Boot Hill, the George Ives jail in Nevada City, and Bannack State Park.

Guided walking tours should be either an overview tour or should focus on a particular topic. They can take place in either Virginia City or Nevada City. They should last somewhere between 20 minutes and two hours, depending on the type of tour group and their interests. An overview tour should be offered every day during the peak season. Different topical tours can be offered on different days, which perhaps will encourage people to stay longer. Perhaps all guided tours should include entry to a building that is normally closed, to attract visitors to this pay-for-service program.

Guided tours of varying distances and durations should be tested in order to see what most visitors or particular groups are interested in and are willing to do. In general, it is better to err on the low side in terms of the number of stops. Try not to exceed fifteen stops, and include only those stops that relate to the topic. The tours should be well researched so that they provide accurate information. One of the great advantages of guided walking tours is that they can be flexible and responsive to the audience. The interpreter can also incorporate new stops such as on-going archaeological or preservation work as appropriate.

The tour starts with the staging period (greeting people, answering questions), continues with an introduction that orients the visitor to the tour and the site, moves on to the stops along the tour providing facts that highlight the topic and one or more themes, and ends with a conclusion. The interpreter should encourage audience involvement by asking questions, suggesting visitors look for something, and carrying or using props. The conclusion should be short and specific. At the end of any Virginia City tour, mention sites in Nevada City that relate to the tour's topic and encourage people to go see those, and vice versa. Every tour should mention or demonstrate current preservation and other activities. Encourage public input on management of the sites.

All guided tours, like self-guided tours, should give a general orientation to the history of the sites and their themes and to visitor activities. When showing visitors a furnished building display, such as on a house tour, it is tempting to discuss furnishings in some detail. Instead, the furnishings should serve as a springboard for discussion of the home life of the family or individual. Show how they felt about life. Discuss the different roles of men and women in the home and in the community.

The interpreter should relate the topic to the visitors and involve them, capturing their interest and encouraging them to want to learn more on their own. Use personal experience and comparisons to the group. Let people touch props. On all tours, adapt the presentation to the audience. Ask questions and encourage comments. Relate the discussion to current issues.

The goal should be to offer a guided overview walk at least once a day in each town, plus tours on specific topics on different days of the week. This will encourage people to stay overnight and to return for more visits. Some tours might require reservations ahead of time.

Guided tours are expensive because of the staff time involved. Both staff and volunteers doing interpretation must be selected with care. Training in the techniques of interpretation is critical, including content, managing visitors, and ensuring visitor comfort. Established tours require regular supervision and on-going evaluation to make sure the content and style of the tours meet Commission goals. Volunteers need attention and also recognition.

It is important to rotate the tours that interpreters lead so that particular buildings or topics do not become their "turf." The Commission should help volunteers and staff

continually expand their areas of interest and knowledge. Encourage activities that benefit everyone, such as the formation of reading groups where volunteers read books or articles on relevant topics and share the information with each other.

Guided tours can be one method of providing increased access inside certain buildings, such as the the Montana Post or the blacksmith shops in Virginia City. This could also be done for certain buildings in Nevada City, such as the Sedman House. The possibilities should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Open certain buildings to the public at regularly scheduled times. This could be done in both Virginia City and Nevada City. Limit tour size to perhaps twelve people, and remove or tie down smaller valuable items. Behind-the-scenes tours of the back rooms of buildings in Virginia City might be quite popular, as would tours of the interior of some of the furnished building displays such as the Dance & Stuart store. Historic house tours are popular and might even be done in cooperation with private homeowners on special occasions.

Custom tours for groups with special interests should be prepared only if there are strong financial or political reasons to do so. For example, a group may request a tour focused on the Irish, or on barber shops. Offer instead to take them on one of the more standard tours (the overview tour, or one on ethnic groups or business life), and then the interpreter can add in material tailored for that group as the standard tour progresses. Otherwise, too much staff time will be spent on preparing a rarely used tour, and the tour itself might become focused on specific identification rather than the larger themes that should be conveyed to every visitor.

The two existing overview brochures should be supplemented with topical brochures that expand on a particular topic and use carefully chosen sites to illustrate that topic. The interpretive subthemes for the sites should be woven throughout the brochures. For example, a brochure on transportation might emphasize the subtheme stating that Montana's early communities developed along somewhat predictable lines based on the aspirations of their residents and on their location in relation to natural resources and transportation routes. The brochure could guide visitors to specific stops, such as the Wells Fargo building and Pittman's Gas Station. It should also direct their attention to the topography of the area and mention how that shaped the transportation patterns. Quotes from people who traveled by various means to Alder Gulch and from those who traveled the road to Summit or Union City on foot or by other means should be included in the brochure. The difficulties of bringing supplies to Alder Gulch in the early years should be emphasized, along with the effects of the automobile (increased tourism, the Road Agents Trail, and the increase in placer mining during the Depression, for example). These patterns can be compared with those in other communities that might be familiar to visitors.

Topical brochures in most cases can appropriately cover buildings, sites, and artifacts in both Virginia City and Nevada City and along the corridor. This can be effectively done, for example, with topics such as a children's tour, architecture, and particular types of artifacts. It would not work for topics such as territorial government or others that are more focused on actual events in Alder Gulch. Brochures covering the entire corridor

Possible topics for guided walking tours and topical brochures:

- **Core historic district of Virginia City**
- **Territorial government**
- **Children's tour/activities**
- **Home life (residences, boarding houses, hotels)**
- **Preservation and restoration of buildings and sites**
- **Communications (newspapers, telegraph)**
- **Vigilantes and road agents, law and order**
- **Social and cultural life**
- **Individual buildings or groups of buildings and their contents**
- **Women of Virginia City**
- **Ethnic and racial groups at Alder Gulch**
- **Civil War**
- **Ghost stories**
- **Mining (include River of Gold Museum)**
- **Cemeteries and graves**
- **Architecture**
- **Transportation (include camels and automobile era in Virginia City)**
- **Original vs. reconstructed buildings on lower Wallace Street**
- **Religion**
- **Virginia City then and now, using historic photographs**
- **Artifact groups (e.g., women's clothing, wagons and buggies, railroad-related) and conservation issues**

will encourage visitors to visit both townsites. But, the distinction between the towns should always be made clear to the visitors.

The Commission cannot offer a full range of free printed items. Visitors should pay for some brochures, whether by donation or by a stated fee. The brochures should be of uniform design to help maintain the identity of the sites managed by the Commission. Careful translations of the basic brochures into selected other languages should be available.

A topic that would appeal to a smaller group of dedicated visitors only but could be successfully done, given Virginia City's wealth of historic buildings, would be a guide to Virginia City's architecture. This could include drawings and written clues to encourage visitors to search for false fronts, particular types of roof construction, ghost signs, decorative details, evidence of high-style design, and other architectural features. The brochure could stress the physical development of Virginia City from a hastily thrown-together mining camp to a permanent community.

The Commission should develop two new walking tours per year for Virginia City and/or Nevada City. Choose topics of interest to general audiences or targeted groups. Start designing walking tour brochures by offering them as guided walking tours first. This allows the tour to be refined and to test visitors' interest, the logistics of the stops, transitions, and other aspects. Use good interpretive techniques such as foreshadowing, mystery, and mentioning features visitors should look for in the stops ahead to increase interest in the tour. Prepare an interpreter's manual for each tour.

Once the popular and successful tours have been identified, the Commission should look

into offering the option of headsets with CD or DVD technology as an alternative to the printed brochures. This technology works well for people who are auditory learners, for visually impaired visitors, for foreign visitors who do not understand English well (if the recording is in a language they understand better), and for large tour groups. Audio tours should supplement but not replace personal services, however. The content would not be exactly the same as the brochures. Audio tours should incorporate music, first-person accounts, oral histories, and a variety of sounds in addition to the narrator's voice. Audio tours can convey a sense of the individuality of people who are part of the story and can bring some of the story to life. Visitors can do these tours at their own pace, and they can fast-forward past stops that do not interest them.

One targeted group for a walking tour brochure should be children. Children and the adults with them might try to guess which buildings are original and which are reconstructions. The children's brochure might include quotes from early children in Alder Gulch, along with historic photographs. It could encourage children to look for particular objects (such as the 3-7-77 sign on a tree, or French doors with original panes of glass, or a pressed-tin ceiling, or the word "Mesker" on a building exterior). It might talk about the type of work children did in the 1800s, the popularity of children in mining camps, and early schools. It could include space for children to write down their impressions. Some stops on the tour might offer photo opportunities or the chance for hands-on activities. A small reward might be offered at the visitor center when the tour is completed.

Visitors pay a fee to rent the headsets and leave their driver's license behind so they do not walk off with the equipment. Some will buy the tape to listen to later or as a souvenir. This technology is costly because of the development, hardware, and software costs, and the equipment has to be replaced periodically. Other disadvantages include the introduction of modern technology to the visitor experience and isolation from the real experience.

Some historic sites have recorded interpretation inside buildings or rooms that plays continuously or at the touch of a button. This does not seem appropriate for Virginia City or Nevada City, as the sound would detract from the historic ambiance and can be quite intrusive to visitors who prefer to experience a site on their own.

All buildings need to be given one name, and that should be the only name used to designate that building in signs, publications, and conversation. Currently, some of the buildings are called by one name on the National Register signs and another in the walking tour brochure. This adds to the confusion caused by the difficult-to-follow maps in the brochures.

For any topical brochures produced in the future, and for future printings of the two overview brochures, follow these guidelines:

- Interweave the interpretive theme and subthemes throughout the brochures and make sure the brochure title and text communicate the intended theme.

- Make sure the maps are easy to follow (do a test run with people unfamiliar with the towns).
- Identify each building by the same name in all media (currently the brochures and the National Register signs and other publications do not always match).
- Make sure the information on the National Register sign and in the brochure agree and that features or objects that are mentioned in either can actually be seen by the visitor.
- Use an easy-to-read print size (do not make the print size small in order to fit more words onto a page).
- Include photographs (perhaps thumbnail photographs of each building discussed), illustrations, graphics such as period advertisements and illustrations, quotes from first-person accounts, and white space.
- Identify the visitor center(s) and other visitor services such as restrooms.
- Place the Alder Gulch stories in the larger context.
- Include information on the Commission's preservation mission and on the work on artifacts and buildings that is being done.
- Mention other nearby historic sites related to the topic that visitors might like to see, such as Bannack State Park for architecture or territorial government or the Mai Wah in Butte for the Chinese.

Driving tour brochures may be developed. In the case of mining, for example, sites for a driving tour might include the remains of placer mining and hydraulic mining near the discovery site and the Virginia City depot, the River of Gold museum, and the dredge tailings near the KOA campground west of Nevada City. The Christenot mill at Union City is a fascinating site and there is good information available on it, but the Bureau of Land Management does not want the site advertised to the general public because the road is hazardous and requires four-wheel drive. It may be possible to identify a lode mine that the public could visit. Perhaps the Conrey headquarters (on private land) could eventually be interpreted in some fashion. A concessionaire might give jeep tours of mining sites. Concerns would be safety (open shafts and adits, unstable buildings), private roads and patented land, and poor access.

In general, the Commission should tell all sides of any story, not just one particular slant or the official version. Care should be taken not to simplify the past. Two particularly challenging topics for interpretation are discussed below:

Vigilantes: The story of the Montana Vigilantes of 1863 and 1864 and the hanging of sheriff Henry Plummer and over twenty accused road agents fascinates people near and far. In the last couple of decades, the nature of the Vigilante movement has been hotly debated. Some "revisionists" are now arguing that Henry Plummer may not have been guilty of all of which he was accused and that his death actually reflected political forces more than the much-touted desire for justice and an end to lawless acts. This debate is likely to continue.

The Commission should continue to present the different points of view on this issue. The Commission should not downplay the Vigilante story, nor should it over-emphasize

this short-lived aspect of Alder Gulch history. The handout that is currently provided to visitors on request explains the debate between the traditionalists and the revisionists, complete with a bibliography. This is a good approach – balanced and not sensationalized. Visitors should be able to decide for themselves the guilt or innocence of the road agents and the motives of the Vigilantes.

Because the Vigilantes are such a topic of interest with visitors, an exhibit on this subject, one that tells all sides of the story – might become quite popular. This could be located inside a building in Virginia City such as the Kiskadden Stone Block. Some first-person interpretation of the Vigilante movement might be done in Nevada City, such as a re-creation of the trial of George Ives.

A special event that might be very successful, given the popular interest in the Vigilantes, is a symposium of scholars and others to debate the significance and facts of the Vigilante movement.

Alder Gulch Short Line Railroad: The Alder Gulch Short Line Railroad is popular with many visitors, particularly children and railfans. In 2000, the first year the No. 12 steam engine operated, the Commission sold 6,600 tickets to the train (both the steam engine and the gasoline-powered engine). Currently, the number of days that the popular No. 12 steam locomotive runs is limited by the number of licensed operators. Three new people plan to take the test before the 2001 summer season.

The railroad, however, presents a major interpretive challenge to the Commission. Its presence - including the operating engines, cars and tracks, the new engine house, the assorted railroad cars and other artifacts, and the two depots - confuses the interpretation of Virginia City. Until 1964, when Bovey built this short railroad track as a visitor attraction, the closest train line to Virginia City was in Alder, some nine miles to the west. Staff and volunteers need to make this clear to visitors.

It is not really possible to separate the train experience from Virginia City and Nevada City. But, because the focus in Virginia City is on the “real” history there, interpretation of the railroad should take place away from Virginia City. This also means that sale of railroad-related items by the Commission and its concessionaires should be limited to Nevada City.

The train serves several useful purposes. It provides a transportation link between Virginia City and Nevada City. The steam engine attracts many people to visit the area on the weekends it operates. But, the cost of operating and maintaining the train, particularly the steam engine, in terms of staff time and actual cash outlays, may very well outweigh the benefits. All work and costs related to the Alder Gulch Short Line should be documented. It is important to keep separate income and expense records for this operation so that its costs can be evaluated. It might, in the end, be more economical for the Commission to lease the No. 12 locomotive out to a private operator on- or off-site; such possibilities should be examined.

Visitors riding the train are a captive audience. Several methods of interpretation might be possible: a brochure (the current one provides information primarily aimed at railfans), an interpreter who also serves as conductor providing formal or informal talks, or a recorded broadcast. During the ten-minute ride, visitors can see evidence of hydraulic mining and of dredging, and these could be interpreted. Written information on other interpretive activities, visitor services, and special events should be available to visitors while they wait for the train ride to begin. First-person living history should not be done on the train – this would muddy the waters too much.

Recommendations:

- Develop two new walking tours a year for Virginia City and/or Nevada City.
- Open certain buildings to the public at regularly scheduled times.
- Once a topical walking tour has been refined and proven successful, prepare a brochure.
- Prepare large-print versions of the two overview walking tour brochures.
- Provide bibliographies on particular topics, reprints of articles, and copies of building inventory forms at the visitor center for those who request such material.
- Prepare a walking tour brochure for children and their families.
- Revise the two overview brochures before the next printing according to the guidelines provided above.
- Create non-English overview walking tour brochures.
- Investigate the desirability of audio tours.
- Design an interpretive program for visitors riding the train.
- Evaluate the Alder Gulch Short Line operations and determine whether the No. 12 should be leased to a private operator.

Options to Consider:

- If a Website is developed for the state-owned properties, offer a virtual tour of Virginia City and Nevada City on-line. One of the successful topical tours might be presented on-line, or highlights of several tours.
- Consider using unobtrusive numbered posts or numbers on buildings in both communities in order to make the tour easier for people to follow on their own.

- If visitation to Nevada City increases, roving interpreters should be tried there. A roving interpreter walks through a site and speaks with visitors as they are encountered. The interpreter can respond to the visitors' needs for specific orientation and information but can also direct their experience toward broader meanings (for example, a question about the date of a building could lead to a discussion of the history of the Boveys' efforts). Roving interpreters must be carefully selected, trained, and supervised, and they must be outgoing, creative and knowledgeable in many areas. This method, however, is less expensive and easier to manage than regularly scheduled tours, particularly on days with low visitation. Because a roving interpreter is moving around a site unpredictably, he or she can also provide additional security for artifacts and buildings.
- The interpretation of several topics related to Alder Gulch would be enhanced if the visitor could see sites that are not within close walking distance of each other. Topics appropriate for driving tours include the Vigilantes, mining, and transportation. In each case, a brochure could be prepared that might guide the visitor to certain sites related to the topic. This is a lower priority, however, than establishing self-guided walking tours and guided walking tours.
- Sponsor a symposium on the Vigilante movement.
- Consider adding a stop midway to the train ride. This could provide a way to interpret the mining landscape or to allow people to get off and visit the River of Gold Museum.
- A long-term goal might be the development of an outdoor railroad museum in Nevada City that ties into the theme of the Bovey story. The yard could be fenced, a special brochure prepared, and admission could be included in the admission fee for Nevada City. Several of the cars in the yard do not need much work before they could be opened to the public. As time and money allows, some could be painted. Access to the engine house to view the No. 12 steam locomotive on the days it is not running could also be provided. A video about steam trains might be shown in Nevada City.
- An even longer-term goal might be extending the tracks of the Alder Gulch Short Line, perhaps to Alder.

Interpreting Commission Management of Sites

Background: The Commission has the opportunity to show visitors on-going work on the state-owned properties in the form of building preservation and restoration, archaeological work, and curation and conservation. Visitors are often quite interested in on-going preservation work, particularly if they are restoring their own homes. Interpretation of the Commission's work started on an informal basis in the 2000 season. The University of Montana archaeological crew prepared a flyer on their work that invited visitors to observe them as they worked.

During the summer season, the foyer of the curatorial center is open seven days a week to the public. It contains an exhibit of several artifacts displayed and identified. VIP and special-occasion tours of the curatorial center are given occasionally, and an annual Open House for the community has been established.

Guiding Principles: Visitors must care about a resource before they value its preservation. The primary goal of interpretation is not to preach preservation and a stewardship ethic but to facilitate an attitude of care in the visitor. Visitors should leave with an understanding of why the state bought the Bovey properties and of the value of preserving the historic structures, artifacts, and the larger landscape of Alder Gulch. The Commission should develop positively worded messages to educate visitors about historic preservation actions and the visitors' role in preserving and protecting cultural resources. Interpretation of the Commission's work should be made more formal and easily available in subsequent seasons. Having staff answer visitor questions while they are working is an inefficient use of staff time, and most visitors do not have the opportunity to hear it.

The most interesting part of a curator's work is the repair and conservation work performed on artifacts on-site and in the curatorial center. Tours of the curatorial center, however, take work time away from the curatorial, introduce environmental contaminants such as dust and light, and present security concerns.

Staff should continue to present public talks and/or demonstrations on their work or research, such as through the Virginia City Preservation Alliance lecture series or in connection with special events.

Interpreters leading guided tours should stop at sites where they can point out the work that is being done by the curatorial staff. The curatorial staff can talk with visitors while continuing to work on site, or visitors can simply observe. This requires prior coordination between interpreters and curatorial staff.

Recommendations:

- The preservation crew and the archaeology crew should present scheduled tours of or talks about current projects once or twice a week. Explain the approach to preservation that is being taken in Virginia City and Nevada City and could promote the work of the state in protecting the sites. Show visitors buildings that are being worked on, archaeological sites, and artifacts found during an excavation.
- Set up portable signs or provide brochures on-site to provide 24-hour-a-day interpretation of the Commission's archaeological and building preservation work.

Options to Consider:

- Putting Plexiglas over the top of an excavation pit might be a way to preserve it for a season, supplemented by an explanatory wayside exhibit or brochure.
- After several years, the Commission might wish to establish an exhibit in one of the buildings in Virginia City interpreting the on-going preservation, archaeological, and conservation work done by the state. Before and after photographs, artifacts found in excavations, a broken piece of pottery next to the actual item, discussions of the trade routes and manufacture of particular excavated items (e.g., enamelware from China), and examples of conservation work might be displayed.
- The display in the curatorial center lobby might be made less static by the addition of a video showing a conservator working on an artifact (perhaps on an object that is on display in the lobby or on-site).

Living History

Background: Some living history has already been done in Virginia City and Nevada City. Period trades such as blacksmithing, log hewing, and tinsmithing are currently being demonstrated on selected days in Virginia City. The Commission charged artisans in Virginia City a 10 percent fee in 2000. In the summer of 2000, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance brought in a woman dressed as Sarah Bickford to talk with visitors in the Water Department (Hangman's) building associated with Bickford. Re-enactments of the mountain men, Civil War, and buffalo runner eras and events have taken place in the area.

Guiding Principles: Living history encompasses a variety of activities that inform and entertain visitors using live people and action. These include period trade demonstrations, first- and third-person costumed interpretation, and scripted drama. The great appeal of living history is that, if done well, it brings the past to life before the audience's eyes. People are immersed in the atmosphere and activities. It is memorable and educational. The audience can become involved in the action and story in ways that they do not when viewing a static exhibit or furnished building display. Living history helps visitors begin to understand the human emotions of the time, such as hope for financial security or longing for home.

Some people love living history; others find it unconvincing and even annoying. Here again, it is best to provide a variety of visitor experiences to meet different people's preferences and needs. The current building displays emphasize quiet, static exhibits that are authentic but involve only the visual sense. Living history can add smells, sounds, and taste to the mix. This can be done through costuming, smells, food, language, gardens, livestock, humor, and period music.

The content of living history can be a real challenge. It is difficult to get information on the daily activities of people in the past. The impression that is created should not be simplistic or romanticized. The *why* as well as the *how* should be conveyed. Living history programs should be integrated into the over-all story of Alder Gulch, not just serve as entertainment. It should tell the whole story, including all races and classes of men, women, and children. The Commission must provide for visitor safety and protection of the buildings, artifacts, and landscape. As with all interpretation, living history, whether demonstrations or street theater or costumed interpreters leading a walking tour, must be based on extensive and accurate research.

Third-person interpretation, where the interpreter dresses from a particular period but speaks from a modern perspective, can be done quite effectively. Third-person interpretation is more forgiving than first-person and is more appropriate for volunteers.

First-person interpretation, when the interpreter acts as if he or she is a real or hypothetical person from the past, is challenging to do well. First-person living history is not well suited to interpreting change over time, although first-person interpreters can recall earlier events. The interpreter must strive for accuracy in both dress and behavior. Visitors sometimes do not know how to interact with a person acting like someone out of the past. Or, they may ask questions to try to stump the person ("What is that object flying by in the sky?"). First-person interpretation might be tried occasionally for special events or on an infrequent (but scheduled) basis. A very successful program at other historic sites is a 30- or 45-minute period class for children in a schoolhouse, with an interpreter playing the role of the teacher. A walking tour can be presented from the point of view of a nontraditional observer, such as a Chinese person, a road agent, or a child, in order to counter stereotypical views of the site.

In general, Nevada City is a more appropriate setting for living history than Virginia City. There is much less modern intrusion inside the gate, which helps visitors immerse themselves in past times without the intrusion of jarring modern sights and sounds. The Commission should keep Nevada City free from modern intrusions as much as possible. Modern vehicles should be kept outside the gate during visitor hours, modern buildings and the highway should be screened from view, and care should be taken to keep small-scale features and landscaping, as well as the buildings and artifacts, appropriate to the time period being interpreted.

It probably would be least confusing to the visitor if all the costumed interpretation focuses on one period. This might not work for Virginia City and Nevada City, however, since the interpretation covers many decades and since the buildings and artifacts date from different periods. Some historic sites do offer concurrent living history programs focusing on quite different time periods. In this case, it is helpful if the interpretation is done inside buildings and visitors walk into a particular time when they enter the building.

Living history programs in Nevada City should focus on the early 1900s, just prior to the introduction of the automobile, although some living history could go back as far

as the 1860s. This would include period trades, third-person interpretation, and street drama. Some day, the Bovey story may be interpreted by living history, but this is not within the scope of the next five years.

Living history could be done at special events in Virginia City. For example, there could be an annual "The Dead Live Again" tour of the cemeteries, with people in costume providing first-person interpretation of individuals buried there. This could be repeated every year with different characters and presentations. First-person interpretation might also be used for programs such as "A Walk with Thomas Dimsdale" or "Meet Bishop Daniel Tuttle."

Programs for children are very important, for children represent the next generation of visitors and supporters. A child's visit to Alder Gulch often leads to a life-long interest in and appreciation of history. If children enjoy visiting a site, their parents are likely to have a good time too, but the converse is also true. For children, living history offers some intriguing possibilities. Children could participate in a period school class, learn how to pan for gold from a miner, or meet in a house for period family activities.

Start small with living history. Experiment, and see what works. Not everything will succeed, but it is impossible to know which will work without trying. Let interpreters research their characters and develop the scripts and scenarios; this keeps it fresh for them and helps them feel part of the process. If possible, locate living history activities in Nevada City so that they are visible from the highway or from outside the fence, enticing people to go inside the gated area.

For example, try offering a dramatic vignette several times a week. Advertise it well, see what the response is, and evaluate it before committing more resources to that particular program. Or, an ordinary talk or guided tour could be interrupted by a person from the past who performs a carefully scripted vignette. The interpreter from the present, and the visitors, might ask questions of the one from the past. After the vignette, the talk or tour continues. Try to get feedback from visitors concerning the experience, the feel, the timing, and other changeable factors. Ideally, each day of the week should have different programs at set times that visitors can attend. The schedule handed out to visitors should list all such programs, including period trade demonstrations and other activities.

The Commission should evaluate any proposed living history programs carefully. Programs and activities should not be approved that do not fit in well with the overall interpretive program or that are not based on accurate research and documented events and activities. For example, many visitors might enjoy seeing a re-enacted gunfight in the streets of Virginia City, but this is more reflective of myths about the West than of the reality of life on Alder Gulch. A clown performing in Nevada City or at special events would only be appropriate if he or she dresses and acts like a clown from sometime between the 1860s and the 1900s.

Roving first-person interpreters may be successful in Nevada City, particularly if the person interacts well with all age groups. At other sites, a roving down-and-out miner has proven popular.

Accurate costuming is critical, but this can become a time-consuming and expensive aspect of interpretation. Much good information on appropriate costuming for various periods can be obtained from the many historic photographs of people in the area. Sewing patterns for historic clothing of various periods is available from several companies. In most cases, everyday clothing rather than formal outfits should be worn.

Period trades and demonstrations can be a powerful tool for drawing people into the past. They bring new sights, sounds, smells, and sometimes taste to the visitor experience. Visitors enjoy watching a craftsperson at work or – better yet – making or doing a part of the work themselves. Where possible, family members should be involved in working together on hands-on activities such as using a rocker. People will often choose to stay longer at a historic site because they want to participate in a demonstration.

Possible period trades:

**Blacksmith
Cabinetmaker
Sawmill
Tinsmith
Assayer
Wheelwright
Barber
Carpenter
Gardener
Gunsmith
Lauderer
Harness and saddlemaker
Milliner
Boot and shoemaker
Wheelwright
Fortune teller**

It is difficult to specify trades and crafts that should be demonstrated in Nevada City, as the possibilities depend on available people, equipment, and facilities. Only trades, crafts, and businesses appropriate to the interpretive period (focus on early 1900s) and related to one or more of the interpretive themes should be approved. Cooking and serving samples of food to visitors would be very popular and would add appropriate smells to the sensory experience, but code restrictions may make this difficult to implement quickly (the health department requires that any business serving food must have water and sewer).

The Commission should evaluate proposals for period trade demonstrations carefully. Ask questions such as, Was this a trade or craft that was practiced in Montana in the early 1900s? This would eliminate the demonstration of crafts such as hand spinning of cotton or wool, which is more appropriate for sites interpreting earlier periods. Does the person offering to demonstrate the trade have detailed knowledge of the practices of the time period and of the appropriate tools and machinery? Can he or she convey this information to visitors in a meaningful way related to the themes of the site? Is there a location for demonstrating this trade that will allow for a safe and enjoyable visitor experience? Can the demonstrator manufacture items needed for the interpretive program of the Commission?

Certain buildings in both Nevada City and Virginia City lend themselves to having costumed interpreters who could talk with visitors about what went on in the building and

about the larger context. These include the boot and shoe shop, the post office, any of the buildings in Chinatown, the Montana Post, and the Gilbert brewery. The Montana Post could print commemorative envelopes, posters, and other items that could be offered for sale. Demonstrating the process of operating a printing press is not the best way, however, to tell the story of the power and importance of newspapers in Montana Territory, of significant early editors such as Thomas Dimsdale or businessmen such as Daniel Tilton, nor of the Boveys' first restoration project in Virginia City.

Possible vignettes for street theater:

- **Gold strike on Alder Gulch by Fairweather party (on discovery site)**
- **Miners' court (George Ives' trial?)**
- **Mail delivery**
- **Argument on street about the Union vs. Confederate cause**
- **Hydraulic miners trying to get visitors to invest in their operation (could be at River of Gold Museum)**
- **Old miner of the 1930s, come to Virginia City for groceries and mail**
- **Miners playing period card games or board games in their cabin, talking to visitors about their lives**
- **Period church service**
- **Chinese person doing laundry for miners (hands-on with reproduction items?)**
- **Roving "capitalist" trying to sell visitors mining stock**
- **Prospector packing his grubstake on a mule**

The operation of historic machinery raises a number of issues, including stewardship of the artifacts (the machinery) and visitor safety. This is a concern with the sawmill in Nevada City, printing press in the Montana Post building, and music machines in the Nevada City music hall and elsewhere. In cases such as this, the Commission might consider bringing in a conservator to evaluate the amount of use, maintenance, and repairs appropriate for particular machines. Visitor safety has to be considered in any proposed activity.

The artisans demonstrating period trades have a very short season and, until visitation grows, a limited customer base. They perform a valuable service to the Commission by providing specialized interpretation, and their production is slowed down considerably because they are interacting with the public. Instead of charging period artisans a fee to be on the site, simply require that any period artisans perform their trade for visitors a minimum number of hours per day. They must also follow the Commission's costuming and interpretation guidelines. Be sure to offer for sale items manufactured by period trade demonstrators in the visitor center store and perhaps in the shops themselves. These could range from tinware to iron hooks to reproduction

furniture. Hire period trades demonstrators to make reproduction items for use by the Commission. For example, sawmill operators might saw rough-cut lumber for use by the preservation crew. Demonstrators who produce items only for the use of the Commission should be paid for their time.

Living history interpretation can be provided by Commission staff, concessionaires, volunteers, and contractors. Any of these should be considered. The Commission should retain control of the costuming and the message, however. Volunteers may do a wonderful job with some forms of living history, but they must be selected carefully and also monitored in order to provide quality control. Living history, done well by the right people, can be incredibly effective and may even become the most popular program.

The Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums, the Seed Savers Exchange (source of heirloom-variety seeds), and other organizations are good sources of information on establishing living history programs.

Street theater (scripted drama) can be used effectively to interpret themes. Drama helps people understand the complexity of historical situations and can convey passionate conviction over issues (perhaps some that continue to be debated today). Street theater must be based on thorough research and be well written. Professional actors should be used for this type of interpretation. Drama students at universities might be recruited, along with members of partner organizations with the appropriate talents.

Dramatic programs can be regularly scheduled or used only occasionally. New ones can be written and added to the schedule each year, helping to keep the site dynamic and changing. In some cases, the audience can be involved. An interpreter might also be available to answer questions provoked by the performance.

Recommendations:

- Incorporate third-person and possibly first-person living history interpretive programs in Nevada City and at special events in Virginia City.
- Establish period trade demonstrations in Nevada City.
- To enhance the atmosphere, reduce modern intrusions in Nevada City to a minimum. Park staff vehicles outside the gate and out of view of visitors during open hours. Avoid driving cars and trucks down Nevada City's streets; modern tire tracks detract from the visitor experience. Block windows of buildings used for storage or as work spaces, preferably with period-appropriate shades.
- Demonstrate skills related to mining at the River of Gold Museum or at Nevada City. A costumed miner could do an interactive program, demonstrating staking a claim and early hand-mining techniques. Visitors could even be divided into teams and join in competitions, with small prizes awarded.
- Try street theater at special events or on an infrequent (but predictable and advertised) schedule to see how it is received. Do not charge an extra fee for street theater; these programs enhance the overall appeal of the two sites and attract people to visit. Have costumed interpreters do "teaser" vignettes in

Virginia City, such as in the restaurants, inviting people to come see a program in Nevada City.

- Prepare guidelines for historic costuming for appropriate periods, including men's, women's, and children's clothing of different classes, and perhaps clothing of Chinese. Interpreters will also need information on period mannerisms and behavior and on relevant daily activities. All aspects of appearance must be accurate, including general tailoring, fabrics, buttons, footwear, hats, hairstyles, jewelry, eyeglasses, corsets, accessories, collars, and ties.
- Introduce third-person living history at special events.

Options to Consider:

- Prepare an interpretive brochure for some of the period trades that would provide a broader context for the activity witnessed by the visitors.
- Costumed interpretation and drama vignettes can be done off-site as part of an outreach program, but this is a lower priority than getting the program going on-site.

Interpretive Signs and Other Wayside Exhibits

Background: All of the state-owned buildings in Virginia City and some of the privately owned buildings that are contributing elements of the National Historic Landmark have aluminum National Register of Historic Places signs mounted on them. Other buildings that appear to be or are historic do not have signs (they are not eligible because they are reconstructions, for example, or they are privately owned and the owner has not purchased a plaque). The Commission has also put up a few signs that are similar in appearance, such as on the Virginia City depot, and a few of the wooden Bovey Restorations-era signs remain. Most buildings inside the gate of Nevada City do not have any interpretive signs.

Existing wayside exhibits include the interpretive signs at Boot Hill and the discovery monument at the discovery site.

Guiding Principles: Signs on buildings have pros and cons. They allow visitors to learn about the buildings during the off season or after the visitor center has closed. They detract from photographs, however, and they create a "museum" atmosphere. The Commission should probably not put signs on the buildings in Nevada City, even after it has been nominated to the National Register, because such modern intrusions limit the ability of visitors to immerse themselves in the past. If signs are considered desirable there, the Commission should consider smaller signs framed in rough lumber; these may be more appropriate and would be similar to the signs that the Boveys once had on most of the buildings. Signs for the outdoor wagons and sites such as the sawmill might be considered, as well as signs that help tell the Bovey story.

Wayside (outdoor) exhibits are particularly useful for interpreting large-scale landscape features. They may be two- or three-dimensional, and they may be interactive. Like signs on buildings, wayside exhibits have the advantage of being available any time and any day of the year. The text on waysides must be short and should usually express a single thought. Sun, wind, rain, snow, and vandalism should be considered when planning new signs. Planners should also evaluate the potential impact of signs on the historic places being interpreted. The signs should be designed to fit in with the surrounding landscape, and they should not interfere with photographs.

New wayside exhibits that might be considered include viewing rings at Boot Hill that focus on particular views (such as the Bozeman trail segment visible from there), signs with the Commission logo marking each of the communities along Alder Gulch and the stage stations between Virginia City and Bannack, the site of the Chinese temple, the proposed site of the state capitol, and the dredge tailings west of Nevada City. Some of the signs could be funded and maintained by partners.

Recommendations:

- Develop wayside exhibits as part of the interpretive planning process.

Options to Consider:

- Develop a walking/bicycling trail connecting Virginia City and Nevada City to help tie the corridor together. Walking along the almost level, mile-long proposed trail would help visitors get a sense of the landscape and enable them to experience the most common means of transportation during the 1860s – walking. More visitors might stop in at the River of Gold Museum if they were walking past it. The trail would also provide a good place for wayside exhibits. The exhibits could interpret the cultural landscape between the two communities, including evidence of mining (dredging and earlier methods) and of Central City. Quotes describing this area during the historic period could be used to good effect, as could historic photographs and sketches. Wildlife and plants of the area might also be interpreted here, particularly as they relate to human use of the area. Visitors could be encouraged to ride the train one way and walk the other. Reproduction period bicycles might be available for rent.

Education Programs

Background: The Montana Historical Society and the Commission established a annual six-day Montana History Camp for Kids (for 7th and 8th graders) in 1999 that is held in Virginia City. A three-day History Camp for Educators was established in 2000. The students experience blacksmithing, gold mining, and preservation, and they restage the 1930 trial of the Harrison bank robbers. The educators study architecture, primary sources, cemeteries, material culture, and crafts. The Commission is considering shorter overnight workshops that might help build attendance at the week-long programs.

The Virginia City Preservation Alliance has prepared curricular material in the form of a newsletter and copies of supplementary material, and in 2000 they took care of the school groups coming to Virginia City.

There is currently no suitable space for education programs. History Camp uses the Madison County Courthouse. The Commission needs to make this a priority if the on-site education program is to expand.

Elderhostel programs held in Virginia City for the past several years have mostly involved labor on the part of participants (preservation work, artifact conservation, and construction) rather than classes and education.

Guiding Principles: Virginia City and Nevada City are a perfect outdoor classroom for immersing students of all ages in the stories of the people and events associated with settlement of the northern Rockies. Educational programs can promote an understanding of the sites' historic themes and an appreciation of their cultural resources.

A great demand for school tours, especially in the spring, already exists. The Commission should work with the Virginia City Preservation Alliance to offer educational programs for school groups that supplement textbooks with experiential learning, providing field studies and classroom materials. Such programs should meet the schools' criteria in history. Curriculum-based field studies for school groups must fit the local curriculum and help teachers accomplish what they are required to do.

The state-owned properties could provide the base for a national preservation training center. Participants would be trained in preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration work, meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and using old tools and historic methods. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, universities, and other government and private organizations might be partners in such an effort. Accommodations for the students would have to be provided. If this proves too problematic (local facilities currently can handle only about fifty participants), Bozeman could be the base for the participants, with field trips to Virginia City. The National Park Service is currently considering establishing a preservation training center in the western United States. Perhaps Butte, Bannack, and Virginia City could provide the resources and facilities needed for such a program. There is plenty of opportunity, too, for relatively simple one-day or weekend workshops. Some of these workshops might be held during the off-peak season.

Study tours and seminars on particular topics for adult audiences might be very effective and popular at Virginia City. Partners for these might include the universities, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Elderhostel. Topics might include oral history, curation, textile conservation, costuming, log building preservation, period interior decoration, or running a steam engine. Hands-on experience should be emphasized. This could become an annual tradition that would raise interest in Alder Gulch and help extend the season.

Universities might cooperate with the Commission in providing hands-on opportunities for their students in disciplines such as museum studies, architecture, history, public speaking, hospitality, historic preservation, and archaeology.

As the archaeology program develops, incorporate its findings into History Camp and other educational programs.

Recommendations:

- Work with the Virginia City Preservation Alliance to hire a seasonal education specialist who schedules and arranges school tours, helps prepare curricular materials, does outreach to students' families, and establishes off-site programming.
- Identify teachers who are willing to serve as advisors for the Virginia City education program. They can help develop curricular materials for teachers and train interpreters to work with school groups. Develop a long-term commitment from school districts so that the school program can continue after active teacher partners no longer work in the school. Approach home-school associations to see if they are interested in the program.
- Prepare packets for teachers that provide detailed practical guidance on arranging for a field trip, plus pre- and post-visit materials and worksheets that can be used in the classroom to reinforce the on-site learning experience. Investigate Teaching with Historic Places program.
- Develop walking tours for school groups. The topics should emphasize people and events and involve hands-on activities such as handling artifacts or reproductions, if possible. A "history search" brochure could be developed with questions that students answer as they go through town.
- Organize a seminar on a particular topic.
- Investigate the pros and cons of establishing an "Alder Gulch Institute," modeled on Yellowstone Institute in Yellowstone National Park and other similar non-profit organizations, to run the adult and secondary school education programs.

Options to Consider:

- The Commission and/or the Virginia City Preservation Alliance should consider developing a "traveling trunk" for teachers to use in the classroom. These large boxes usually contain artifacts, games, puzzles, posters, books, videos, and suggestions for teacher activities. The hands-on activities are quite popular with both teachers and students. The contents of the trunks should be curriculum-

based, and every item must relate directly to the story of the sites. The school pays a rental fee that covers the cost of shipping.

- Teaching with Historic Places is a program administered by the National Register of Historic Places. See whether its guidelines for preparing lesson plans would help further the Commission's educational goals. The program emphasizes linking historic sites to broad themes, issues, and events covered in most social studies curricula. Lesson plans would include background information, learning objectives, maps, readings, photographs, and activities.
- Consider developing off-site educational programs for children and adults, although this is not a high priority for the near future. They can help increase visitation, achieve interpretive goals, and create a positive image for Virginia City and Nevada City. Such programs might include talks at area schools, presentations to area service clubs, and campfire programs at the private campgrounds in Virginia City and near Alder.

Working with Educational Partners

Background: The Commission works closely with many different entities that have a stake in the future of the historic resources in Virginia City and Nevada City. These include Virginia City residents, city government, county government, non-profit preservation and education organizations, and state and federal agencies.

The Virginia City Preservation Alliance was established in 1994 as a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and revitalizing the Virginia City National Historic Landmark. It was created to be a partner ("cooperating association" or "friends group") that would work with the National Park Service, which at the time was expected to become the managing agency for the National Historic Landmark. The organization now owns two historic buildings – the Hangman's Building in Virginia City and Robbers Roost along Highway 287 approximately fifteen miles west of Virginia City.

During the summer of 2000, members of the organization offered guided walking tours, organized a highly popular weekly lecture series, and coordinated the provision of interpretive services to school groups. The Alliance also has a small sales area and information desk in the Hangman's Building, has installed a diorama of a hanging and is planning more exhibits in the Hangman's Building, and helps organize the Grand Victorian Ball and the annual Heritage Days.

In 2000, the Executive Director of the Commission began talking with other historic townsites managers about the possibility of establishing an association of similar sites.

Guiding Principles: A cooperative relationship between the Commission and the Virginia City Preservation Alliance that is mutually beneficial should be continued and strengthened. The focus should be on the groups' common mission and purpose, on collaboration rather than on competition. An on-site manager hired by the Commission

could help the Commission and its local partners build trust and work well together. The Commission should definitely coordinate its activities with local individuals as well as with the Preservation Alliance. For example, arrangements might be made for Commission tour guides to suggest to visitors that they go inside the 1864 Elling Bank building (now a retail business) to look at the ornate bank vault door in the rear of the building. The Commission must take care, however, in all of its tours and publications, not to violate the privacy of Virginia City residents.

Commission staff should continue giving lectures through the Alliance weekly summer lecture series. Staff should also give talks for local civic groups, do radio interviews, set up exhibits at county fairs, and be involved with the community in other ways. Members of the community should continue to be invited to attend and participate in Commission meetings and to serve on the Commission or its committees.

Other possible partners include National Park Service, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, National Trust for Historic Preservation, U.S. Forest Service, local school districts, and civic groups. The Commission should also consult with the culture committees of appropriate tribes concerning traditional stories related to the region and integrate these into the interpretive program.

Recommendation:

- Continue participating in the organization of an association of western North American historic towns. Such an association of professional historic townsites managers could prove invaluable to the Commission because of the exchange of information on specific ideas, group training opportunities, and networking possibilities. Investigate other professional organizations, such as the National Association for Interpretation, because they too may be valuable resources.

Research

Background: A great deal of information about the history of Alder Gulch and how it fits into the national and international contexts is available. The Montana Historical Society Library and Archives in Helena has the most comprehensive collection of material related to topics interpreted in Virginia City and Nevada City. In 1999, the Commission contracted for the preparation of a comprehensive annotated bibliography of Alder Gulch that covers the materials in Helena and elsewhere.

The curatorial and preservation/maintenance staff maintain separate files documenting the museum collection and the historic structures and have established small, specialized reference libraries for their own use. Individual researchers working on a topic related to artifacts in the state's collection are encouraged to schedule appointments with the curatorial staff.

The Commission has begun interviewing people for information related to the preservation, curation, and interpretation programs. For example, descendants of the

blacksmiths who had their shops in the Kiskadden and Sauerbier buildings have been interviewed in connection with the preservation work on these two buildings. The resulting tapes will be housed in the Montana Historical Society Archives.

Guiding Principles: The interpretive program has to be based on thorough, accurate research. Persuasive, dramatic interpretation using inaccurate information is worse than no interpretation at all. The Commission needs to develop a reputation for a commitment to a high-quality product, and that will largely be based on portraying the past truthfully rather than whimsically.

The indexed, annotated bibliography prepared for the Commission, and the accompanying historiographic essay, should be the starting point for identifying sources on any particular topic. Volunteers and student interns might be used to conduct some needed research.

The research collections in Virginia City and in Helena are a valuable source for information used in interpretive programs. Diaries and letters, for example, can provide information on life in Alder Gulch and can be used to great effect in interpretive programs. Photographs can be used in indoor and outdoor exhibits. When information on a particular type of business is lacking for Alder Gulch, information from other sites, preferably in Montana, can be used to answer questions (e.g., what would a Chinese restaurant of the 1870s have looked like, and what kind of food would it have served?).

A research collection on Alder Gulch should be established in Virginia City. The collection should include books, articles, photocopies of archival material such as the Virginia City Sanborn maps, microfilm of early newspapers and dissertations, photocopies or scanned electronic images of photographs, planning documents, sketches, and maps. It will primarily be used to support interpretation and preservation work. The collection should be open to researchers such as photojournalists and historians who express an interest in additional information. Some material, such as information on the location of certain archaeological resources, will have restricted access, and some objects may be subject to copyright. A computer with Internet access and access to Alder Gulch-related databases and other material should perhaps be available for researchers. Commission and library staff should decide whether materials can be used in the library only or whether some can be loaned out. Eventually, the collection should be catalogued on computer with a cross-referencing system.

Routinely consider expanding the developing library as new materials become available, particularly books on core topics, in order to remain current with recent research. It may be found that a microfilm reader and microfilmed materials, such as dissertations, archival collections, newspaper series, census records, and so on, will be warranted. Decide on acquisitions after considering the holdings of the Madison County Courthouse and to avoid duplicating readily available materials. Obtain materials that are useful to all aspects of site operations, such as supervision, management, administration, law enforcement, natural resource management, and related subjects.

Many research needs have already been identified, and others will doubtless be identified in the future. The results of the research should be filed in such a way that it meets the needs of the staff and is easily retrieved. At regular intervals, Commission and Montana Historical Society staff should reevaluate the sites' research needs and prepare plans for meeting them.

Recommendations:

- Conduct research on the following topics, and possibly others, to add accurate details to the interpretive program: *material world of nineteenth-century communities; stores and other businesses; domestic practices; education practices; the lives of children; landscaping; biographies of significant individuals and families; mining and residential architecture of the West; histories of the buildings in Nevada City; recreation in nineteenth-century America; furnishing studies of particular buildings; and lives of servants.* For example, under domestic practices, information on topics such as cooking outside, decorating with muslin, and outbuildings might have immediate application to walking tours and living history programs.
- Establish an Alder Gulch research collection in partnership with the Thompson-Hickman Memorial Library for the use of staff, the general public, and school groups.
- Establish a procedure for soliciting and processing information on the history of Alder Gulch from locals and from visitors. Display a prominent sign in the visitor center asking visitors who know of someone who lived in the area and left some record of that involvement to provide a name and address where this information can be obtained. Provide a standard form to visitor center staff so they can record the visitor's contact information and provide this to the curator of history for follow-up. Develop a procedure for making copy negatives of photographs loaned by visitors and locals.
- Encourage the on-going recording of oral histories related to the Commission's interpretation, curation, and preservation programs. Possible interviewees might include long-time Virginia City residents, former Bovey employees, visitors with stories to tell, and people who mined in Alder Gulch in any period. Information not available elsewhere will be obtained through these interviews. In addition, excerpts from these taped interviews could be used in audiovisual programs.
- In cooperation with local individuals and organizations interested in area history, prepare an inventory and index of all the historical records available in the city, including the extensive Dick Pace collection at the library, the artifacts and photographs in the two museums, and perhaps items and photographs in private collections. If individuals and organizations are willing, some material could be loaned to the Montana Historical Society for microfilming.

Options to Consider:

- Encourage the publication of articles and books on the history of Alder Gulch, perhaps through an annual fellowship. The information so gathered would help interpretation and might also increase general interest in the area.

BUSINESS CONCERNS

Establishing Identity for the State-owned Properties

Background: Many people come through Virginia City, look into a few buildings, and leave, never realizing that it is a historic site managed by the state or that Nevada City, a mile away, is also state-owned property managed for the public. The name recognition of Virginia City is an asset, but visitors may be confused by the existence of two sites, one that is mixed in with private buildings in Virginia City and the other that is a self-contained site, plus additional attractions such as the River of Gold Museum.

The Commission does have a logo, a design of five circles drawn from architectural features on the Dance & Stuart building in Virginia City. Visitor center staff wear a vest that identifies them as Commission staff, but visitors may not always recognize this as a uniform. The signage directing visitors to the sites' attractions lacks a consistent design.

Guiding Principles: The Commission needs to project a positive and easy-to-visit image for Virginia City and Nevada City, beginning off-site and continuing through the entire on-site experience. From the outset, visitors need to experience a sense of arrival that includes the message that the two sites are managed by the state. It should be clear to visitors that after parking their car, they should enter the visitor center.

The Commission should design signs that direct visitors to the visitor center and other visitor facilities. Make sure that the signs share a consistent design and that they are easily visible from vehicles.

All staff who come into frequent contact with the public should wear recognizable clothing.

Commission staff should consider the photographs and text prepared by travel writers about Virginia City and Nevada City. How do they present the sites? How can the Commission help these writers convey appropriate images and the Commission message? Provide photographs whenever possible of people enjoying their visit to Virginia City and Nevada City.

A Website can also help meet interpretive objectives, particularly if it is interactive and allows the user to follow links to learn about historic themes or explore particular topics of interest. Although such educational goals are not high priority, it can be used create effects that cannot be seen on-site, to create virtual tours of selected properties, and to provide some aspects of the experience to disabled people. It could become an important educational tool for schools. It could also provide networking and bulletin boards with other mining and nineteenth-century town sites and museums, distribution of educational materials, and sale of publications.

A Website can help potential visitors plan their trip before leaving home by including a calendar of events, historical information, and links to area lodging and other visitor services. It can be used to reach targeted audiences and to encourage people to make return visits to see new programs and displays. The site can also be a way to make Commission reports and meeting minutes available to the public. If a Website is created, its address should be given in all literature about the sites.

The Commission site should be linked with geographically or thematically related sites such as the Montana Historical Society, Bannack State Park, the Virginia City Chamber of Commerce, Tom Sargent's Virginia City site, Travel Montana, Gold West Country, the Frontier Heritage Alliance, Bodie State Park, Fort Phil Kearny, Columbia State Park, Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Site, Barkerville Heritage Town, and various state and federal agencies. Bulletin boards can allow people with special interests to exchange information.

Recommendations:

- Come up with one name to identify the corridor, using an inclusive term such as Alder Gulch or the Fourteen-Mile City. The use of the existing logo could be expanded, or a contest could be held to come up with a different logo. Once selected, use the logo on everything – signs, publications, stationery, napkins, etc. Also create a marketing slogan, such as “visit Montana’s nuggets on a chain of gold” or “experience the gold rush.” Or, a theme slogan such as “Becoming Americans” could help identify the sites and define their purpose.
- Draw up design guidelines for all Commission signs and use them consistently. The lettering may be historic in appearance, but modern lettering is probably preferred since the first priority is that it be clear and easy to read. Work with the community to promote common signage design throughout the corridor, including signs identifying visitor services such as public restrooms.
- Work with the community to install a carefully designed system of signs that helps visitors find their way through Virginia City and into facilities in both Virginia City and Nevada City that offer information and interpretation.
- Replace some of the existing signage immediately, such as the highway sign at the River of Gold Museum (this sign looks commercial and may actually turn visitors away rather than attract them).
- Establish an interactive Web site that attracts visitors and can be used as a marketing and educational tool.
- Hire an on-site manager.

Options to Consider:

- An annual calendar prepared by the Commission could help promote the images and messages the state would like to see emphasized. The on-going story of preservation of the state-owned properties could be emphasized. Quotes from historic documents could be used very effectively, along with photographs.
- Establish a line of merchandise that could include items made by period trade demonstrators in Virginia City and Nevada City, replicas of items in the collection, and related materials such as calendars, greeting cards, and postcards. These could be sold on-site and also over the Internet.

Coordinating Marketing with Other Historic Sites

Background: The Nichols/Gilstrap Market Assessment recommended that the Commission partner with local and regional organizations and businesses in marketing its attractions. The Commission already has connections with historic and other sites in the region. Yellowstone National Park's west entrance at West Yellowstone is 85 miles from Virginia City; hundreds of thousands of people travel through that gateway.

Guiding Principles: Commission staff should develop and maintain contacts with media professionals in the area in order to ensure coverage of on-going and special events in newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, through public service announcements and feature stories. The Commission should maintain a list of media contacts, deadline information, style sheets, writer's guidelines, and other relevant information. Contacts with television producers and film companies should be maintained and expanded with the goal of having the sites featured on national television programs, movies, and documentaries. The familiarization tours offered to tour operators, writers, and others who have the ability to promote the state-owned properties should be continued.

Regional marketing is very important. Staff is already distributing information at regional meetings and conventions, and this should be continued. Information on overnight lodging, special events, and tour planning should be provided at all such venues. The Commission might reconsider the emphasis on the train and hanging of road agents, however, that is currently being used to advertise Virginia City, and focus instead on the interpretive themes.

The Commission should target the audiences it is trying to reach through its marketing efforts and then evaluate the success of the program. The Nichols/Gilstrap report advised focusing on the over-fifty market, group tours, families, and school groups (particularly school districts with breaks during the shoulder seasons). Visitor research done by other sites, such as Yellowstone National Park, should be examined to see what publications potential visitors read before committing money to advertising in publications such as airline magazines. Commission brochures should also be placed in the obvious mass public-contact locations such as airports and hotels.

The Commission should try to arrange for mutual promotion at related sites in the region such as Bannack State Park and Yellowstone National Park. The state might even work

The Commission should arrange for mutual promotion with these sites and others:

- **the Thompson-Hickman Memorial Museum**
- **the J. Spencer Watkins Memorial Virginia City-Madison County Museum**
- **Bannack State Park**
- **Robbers Roost**
- **Montana Historical Society Museum**
- **Beaverhead County Museum**
- **Yellowstone National Park (and perhaps Glacier National Park)**
- **Museum of the Rockies**
- **Gallatin County Historical Society**
- **Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site**
- **World Museum of Mining, Berkeley Pit**
- **Wah Chong Tai Company and Mai Wah Noodle Parlor**
- **Big Hole Battlefield National Historic Site**
- **Golden Spike National Historic Site**
- **Madison County Earthquake Visitor Center**

out a cooperative marketing arrangement with other sites that are related either geographically or thematically. Fundraising efforts should be sure to include the possibilities of seeking grants in cooperation with other historic sites.

Commission staff should continue publicizing events at other sites, particularly those within the immediate Virginia City area but also relevant ones in other areas, such as the 2001 Bozeman Trail or the Lewis and Clark bicentennial commemoration. Closely related events, such as those sponsored by the Virginia City Preservation Alliance or local businesspeople, should be printed on Commission schedules that are given out at the visitor center. These organizations should be encouraged to do the same for Commission programs in their own newsletters and other publications. Related historic sites around North America can be promoted in creative ways, such as by displaying a map in the visitor center showing the flow of miners throughout western North America, highlight sites that are interpreted for the public.

Many different organizations have members who have already or might in the future lend their expertise to the Commission efforts in Virginia City and Nevada City. These include the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, Montana Historical Society,

Montana Ghost Town Preservation Society, the Montana Association of Museums, the Montana Preservation Alliance, and the Klepetko Chapter of the Society for Industrial Archaeology, and others. All of these organizations should receive press releases about on-going programs and special events and requests for contributions of time and money. Interested local businesses, particularly ones located in historic buildings, might become partners too.

The Bureau of Land Management, Beaverhead National Forest, and National Park Service may employ archaeologists, interpreters, and preservation crews who might be able to partner with the Commission. Professors and students at Montana State

University, University of Montana, and Montana Tech should be encouraged to get involved. Some of these connections have already been made.

Partnerships with area tourism associations, business associations, and chambers of commerce are also highly desirable. For example, the Commission is already working with the West Yellowstone Chamber of Commerce. This has the potential for increasing visitation to the Virginia City area.

Recommendations:

- Establish strong connections with other historic sites and with educational partners.
- Work with the Montana Department of Transportation to install highway signs to attract southwestern Montana travelers to Virginia City and Nevada City.
- Work with National Park Service and other partners to create a regional mining Heritage Area, which could be a source of additional funding. If it is created, then the Alder Gulch sites should be featured in all publicity.

Options to Consider:

- Develop an inexpensive or free promotional item, such as a bookmark or a pin.
- Jointly produce publications and audiovisual programs with other sites and museums in the area. Joint staff training and staff exchanges might also be beneficial to all involved.

Fundraising

Background: One of the Commission's main funding sources for operations, the bed-tax fund, will not be committed to Virginia City and Nevada City after 2001. There will then be no dedicated revenue stream available to the Commission other than its earnings through operations. Successful fundraising is critical to the continued operation of the state-owned properties. The Commission is continuing to seek annual support from the state.

The Future of the Past Committee was developed recently in Montana to investigate sustainable funding for the protection of history in Montana; this may become a good source of funding in the future.

Over the 2000 season, 1,600 visitors signed the guest book in the visitor center. This is the start of a mailing list that can be used to notify people of special events and projects and to solicit donations.

As a fundraising activity, the Commission has minted and sells \$5 tokens ("Alder Gulch Gold") that can be used to purchase any Commission service. Concessionaires and local businesses honor the tokens. The Commission is working on ways to market this program. The Commission makes money from this program whenever a visitor decides to keep a token as a souvenir or does not spend all the tokens he or she purchased. In addition, visitors often spend any remaining tokens at the end of their visit on items they might not have purchased otherwise; this helps local businesses.

Guiding Principles: It is absolutely critical that the Commission obtain a sustainable source of funding. Without this, shortcuts are going to have to be made in taking care of and interpreting the resources, the visitor experience will decline, and the original purpose of purchasing the properties will be sidetracked.

People often are more willing to donate money for specific projects such as restoring buildings than they are for operational expenses such as salaries. It is therefore good to focus on things that visitors can touch when asking for money. Soliciting funds to care for specific buildings and artifacts might work, but it could lead to problems. What if the donor wants to have some control over the building or artifact? What if money is left over; can it be used in other ways? Such a program would also require staff time to track and implement it. One option is to establish trust funds for specific groups of artifacts, such as the music machines, clothing, or horse-drawn vehicles. Once all the artifacts of a particular type have been inventoried, the Commission should consider the possibility of establishing such trust funds. For example, the Commission could sell the gavioli for about \$100,000 and use that money to create a trust to take care of the music machines that have been accessioned.

The Commission should pursue grants from a wide variety of sources. These would include companies that manufacture restoration materials, General Mills (associated with the Bovey family), newspapers (to restore the Montana Post building), the Montana state legislature or an organization of active and retired legislators (Contents Corner and Stonewall Hall), the Montana Department of Transportation (the Bozeman Trail story), and so on. Federal and state grants should also be explored, such as Community Transportation Enhancement Program grants, Federal Heritage Program (for a new visitor center), Community Development Block Grants, Tourism Infrastructure Improvement Program grants through Travel Montana, and the Institute of Museum Services grants.

Recommendations:

- Obtain a sustainable source of funding sufficient to support high-quality preservation and interpretation of the state's properties.
- Hire a fundraising/development specialist whose full-time job is to raise money and promote the sites. Preparing grant applications, encouraging bequests, working on a membership campaign, making multiple visits with potential

donors, and follow-up are all time-consuming. The fundraiser's work should pay for his or her own position and so should be established as soon as possible.

- Obtain names and addresses of visitors whenever possible. Consider each and every visitor a potential return visitor and a potential donor. Communicate annually with all visitors with known mailing addresses.
- Put donation boxes, such as the ones placed at the Nevada City gate during the off season, in several locations. Include requests for donations in all Commission publications, as is done on the brochure for the McFarland Curatorial Center.
- Pursue grants from corporations that have ties to various aspects of Virginia City and Nevada City.
- Establish an endowment fund to support Commission activities in order to work towards the goal of being self-sufficient.

Options to Consider:

- Prepare a catalog or "wish book" to show potential donors the types of projects (curatorial, preservation, and interpretive) that need funding, with a brief description and cost estimates. For example, a \$100 donation could pay for a crew of volunteers to oil twenty wagons. A \$500 donation could pay for conservation work on a doll. A \$750 donation could pay for a craft demonstration over a certain period of time.

Concessions

Background: Charlie and Sue Bovey did not operate gift shops in Virginia City and Nevada City. In 1989, however, soon after the death of Sue Bovey, Bovey Restorations installed many gift shops in their buildings in Virginia City, even in the Dance & Stuart building and the toy store. All but two or three closed within a couple of months, however, because the market was flooded.

The Commission currently manages twenty concession contracts. In Virginia City, these include the Fairweather Inn (with fifteen guest units), Bale of Hay Saloon, Opera House, Wells Fargo Coffee Shop, Gilbert Brewery, Bob's Place (a restaurant) and others. These are reviewed each year in late fall on a case-by-case basis. One of the most successful is the Virginia City Players, which gave their first performance in the Opera House in 1949. The two hotels bring in some money and provide a needed service. In 1999, Commission lodging was approximately 55 percent full during the visitor season.

Private businesses include several restaurants, a candy shop, and quite a few gift shops. Several bed-and-breakfasts and a private campground also provide lodging for visitors. There is no gas station, grocery store, laundromat, or hardware store in Virginia City at

any time. All but a very few retail services cater primarily to summer visitors. Residents are accustomed to traveling at least fourteen miles for most services.

In Nevada City, the Star Bakery is a popular breakfast and lunch destination, and the Nevada City Hotel and Cabins has thirty-one guest units. A gift shop is the only other concession in Nevada City. These businesses are located along the highway, outside the gated area.

Respondents to a visitor survey in 1999 suggested expanding the variety of food, shops, entertainment, and attractions in the two cities. Many of today's travelers want access to telephones, fax machines, photocopiers, hotel rooms with private bathrooms, and other facilities while on the road. Some of these could be provided in the hotels. Or, the hotels could be kept as they are and such facilities provided elsewhere. The Commission should assess which buildings offer the best locations and facilities for certain businesses and try to get people to operate them.

The Commission operates seven businesses in addition to managing twenty concession contracts. These businesses are the visitor center, museum store, Alder Gulch Short Line Railroad, Nevada City gate, residential rentals (six houses), a film location business that recruits film-makers and manages on-site filming, and grazing leases.

In the summer of 2000, a 25-minute tour by stagecoach to the discovery site was offered to visitors for \$7.50. This operation is a Commission concession. This concessionaire also coordinated an auction of "types of merchandise that would have come over the Bozeman Trail" that raised funds for the Virginia City Volunteer Fire Department. A tour up to Boot Hill in a 1940s fire truck, operated privately (not a concession), is also available to visitors. Other appropriate options might include a carriage ride or a buggy ride. It might be possible to have a concessions for jeep tours to outlying mining sites. This would provide a memorable experience for those who are interested and willing to take the time and would complement the Commission's interpretive programs well. The city of Virginia City recently enacted an ordinance that prohibits concessionaires from using the highway within 500 feet of each other. This limits the locations of potential transportation-related concessions.

The River of Gold Museum is located along Highway 287 close to Nevada City. This mining museum was developed by a private individual. The Boveys eventually purchased the museum and the land in order to secure the right-of-way for the railroad running across the property. The state currently leases the museum as a concession, which includes a gold-panning operation for visitors, a gift shop, and an "artifact garden" of deteriorating mining machinery and equipment. A bucket dredge brought in from Idaho sits in a dredge pond left behind by the Alder Gulch dredges, and a landscape shaped by hydraulic mining is adjacent to the site.

In July 2000, the Commission determined that one of its objectives for achieving the goal of fiscal integrity is to develop and implement at least one new commercial activity per

year. This commercial activity may be either internal, such as offering a walking tour for a fee, or external, such as establishing a new concession.

Guiding Principles: Retail shops under concession permits with the Commission should be considered part of the interpretive experience. They ought to be businesses that both contribute to revenue and enhance the overall visitor experience. They should sell the past, including theme food and products that visitors can take home with them, preferably in a way that minimizes competition with private businesses on Wallace Street. Visitors are looking for an experience. They may buy items in Virginia City and Nevada City that they would not buy elsewhere.

The Commission should carefully balance the needs of particular concessionaires with its mandate to protect the historic buildings under its care. Businesses similar to one in a building during the interpretive period should be preferred, followed by ones that are appropriate to the period. Authenticity of dress, interior décor, and merchandise should be required, but modern methods and equipment have to be used when necessary to meet public health and safety codes. Health and safety issues include fire detection and suppression, health codes for food vendors, hantavirus, weed control, emergency medical response, emergency exits, sanitation codes for drinking water and waste water, and law enforcement.

The Commission should provide written guidelines to all concessionaires providing interpretation in any form and should monitor their compliance. Business people are likely more focused on selling their products than on providing accurate interpretation to visitors. If costuming is part of the program, information on clothing and materials should be included. If clothing, items for sale, or interpretation are inaccurate, misleading, or inappropriate, the Commission should work with the concessionaires to make the necessary corrections.

The management of some of the smaller concession contracts requires an inordinate amount of staff time and produce little revenue. These should be evaluated; perhaps it would be better to eliminate some of the concessions.

Ideally, concessions ought to represent businesses that were common to northern Rockies gold rush towns or that were unique to Alder Gulch. A wide variety of goods were available in Virginia City at its height. Appropriate businesses might include a *blacksmith, cabinetmaker, carpenter, dry goods store, grocery, toy store, bakery, gunsmith, harness and saddlemaker, Oriental goods store, Chinese restaurant, silversmith, dance hall, jeweler, fruit stand, soda fountain, upholstery store, and wheelwright*. Some of these might best be operated as a period trade. Store employees portraying a historic person or role can be very effective, although this requires training and the right personality. Certain types of businesses, such as an apothecary, livery, doctor's office, laundry, or a meat market, are best interpreted by static exhibits rather than by a concession or period trade.

Criteria for determining the suitability of new concessions and appropriate locations:

- **Historic authenticity and/or compatibility**
- **Availability of building compatible with the proposed business**
- **Ability to improve visitor understanding of the period**
- **Ability to work within operational, maintenance, and security constraints**
- **Ability to be an active business**

Although it may be possible to outline the desired retail mix, it will be difficult to attract missing businesses and services based on that knowledge. The Commission should provide businesses that are as turn-key as possible. Reducing the rent charged would help encourage new operations, but there still has to be someone with the appropriate interest and skills. Rather than listing concessions and activities that should or should not be allowed, this plan suggests policy and guidelines but allows for the new ideas and creativity of future managers and concessionaires.

Two examples of appropriate retail concessions are the rock shop on the south side of Wallace Street and the Montana Picture Gallery. The latter is located in a

building that has been used as a photo studio since the 1940s. A retail store might specialize in selling children's items such as games and clothing related to the interpretive period.

The Commission should focus on attracting concessions that both contribute to revenue and increase the overall appeal of the destination. The Commission should encourage high-end gift shops rather than those selling inexpensive souvenirs available at many sites. The Commission should discourage chain stores, fast-food operations, "tacky" gift shops selling items such as T-shirts, Indian jewelry, and candles, and stores run by hired managers rather than owner-operated businesses.

People proposing a concession that will provide interpretive services should prepare an interpretive plan for review by the Commission. This must explain how the concession will involve the visitor in the past life of the area. The proposal should fit into and complement the interpretive goals and objectives of the Commission. Topics covered for the stagecoach concession, for example, should include employee clothing, interior décor of concession facilities, use of state-owned artifacts and furnishings, information provided on standard tours, special interpretive programs such as re-enactments or period skill demonstrations, special programs for school groups, style of service (interaction with customers), advertising, displays of historic equipment, discussion of access for all visitors, and the provision of interpretive materials to the public.

The Commission should ensure that all concessions complement the interpretive program. The best situation is when the primary source of revenue for a concession comes from a product or service that is in itself interpretive, such as a stagecoach ride or period food in a restaurant. People come to Montana for an experience; give them a piece of that to take home. Here, as in other areas, take risks and see what works and what does not. The Commission needs to monitor tour operators closely for accuracy of

interpretation and for provisions for visitor safety. Make sure that the concessionaires understand and accommodate the special needs of visitors with disabilities (mobility, hearing, and learning).

Much appropriate merchandise is available. If possible, the merchandise and craft items sold by concessionaires should be difficult to find elsewhere and should build on the town's identity. Regionally or locally made items have special appeal and should be identified as such. The Commission museum store should be a role model for private businesses in terms of selling appropriate items. Concessionaires can also have mail-order and Commission Website (e-commerce) business and may even sell replicas to other historic towns.

Concessions within the gated area of Nevada City should, at least over the next few years, focus on demonstrating period trades to visitors. Any concessions inside the gate should sell reproduction period goods in a period-appropriate manner. Street vendors selling appropriate food items such as lemonade or apple pies might be most successful, at least until visitation is greatly increased. They could sell their wares out of coolers hidden inside pushcarts, barrels, or even ore carts. Street vendors can play an important role in making people feel welcome and encouraging them to stay longer.

Some concessions might be well suited to interpretive exhibits. For example, the Fairweather Inn might have a display illustrating its different uses and modifications over the years. The time period of the hotels should be identified and an effort made to keep the furnishings and general ambiance within that period. Artifacts or reproductions that are displayed in concessions should be labeled. If there is enough information, historic window displays in concession buildings might be a good idea. Or, a graphic interpretive display would add interpretive interest to the building. The concessionaire might be required in his or her contract to maintain the interpretive displays.

Eventually, one or more restaurants in Virginia City might offer visitors menus based on historic menus of various periods or on records associated with steamboats coming up the Missouri River with supplies for Montana's mining camps. These might include a bar lunch or a Chinese restaurant. The employees should wear authentic clothing and be able to tell people about the restaurant, and the interior décor should also reflect the selected period. This would provide visitors with an experience not available elsewhere.

The mining story is important to interpret because it explains why Virginia City and Nevada City exist. The interpretation at the River of Gold Museum is minimal and needs to be reworked. Currently, the displays and the artifacts do not convey an understanding of the process of extracting precious metals from rock and the impacts of mining on the world economy.

The interpretation at the River of Gold Museum should help visitors understand the why and the how of turning dirt and rock into gold. An overview of the differences between placer and lode deposits and their owners and operators should be provided. The visitor should be able to see the progression of mining techniques and should be able to

understand the importance of water to mining operations. For milling, consider displaying processed ore in various stages (e.g., rock, crushed rock, slime, tailings). Exhibits on the environmental effects of mining – perhaps using overlay maps or other graphics along with historic photographs – should be provided. This should discuss Alder Gulch primarily but also touch on other areas. An exhibit on regional geology should explain why gold is found in Alder Gulch and how this ties in to other mining sites in Montana, and comment on continuing exploration and production. The story of dredging is fascinating and multi-faceted; rather than simply describing how a dredge operated, tell about their use around the world, explain how they allowed low-grade deposits to be worked, and describe the typical work-day of a dredge employee.

The River of Gold Museum could become a stop on the train run. It should become an integral part of the whole “Alder Gulch experience.” The corridor should be emphasized, not just the two townsites at Virginia City and Nevada City. Interpretive staff should schedule occasional interpretive talks at the museum.

As with any exhibits, the more interactive and the more they relate to the visitor, the better. For example, use excerpts from journals where miners talk about how sore their backs are from digging. Provide examples of wages and of the cost of living over the decades. Interweave oral histories about Depression-era mining. Bring in mules and operate an arrastra for a special event. Consider offering a tour to nearby remains of historic mining operations. Display a pile of rock showing how much rock is necessary to be removed from the ground to produce enough gold for a wedding band in low-grade and high-grade ore. Set up a hydraulic mining display, with a reproduction flume, monitor, and sluice box, and staff it with costumed interpreters on a scheduled basis.

Recommendations:

- Provide written guidelines to all concessions providing interpretation in any form and monitor their compliance.
- Require people bidding on concessions that involve interpretation to provide an interpretive plan to the Commission for review.
- Prepare guidelines for gold panning demonstration.
- Keep modern intrusions inside concessions to a minimum. For example, radios playing modern music have no place in the hotel lobbies. The modern coolers and juke box in the Bale of Hay Saloon similarly detract from the atmosphere. Modern equipment such as cash registers should be hidden, and radios and telephones should not be allowed within the public area of retail stores.
- Investigate pros and cons of establishing an “Alder Gulch” line of merchandise.
- Prepare an exhibit/interpretive plan for the River of Gold Museum. Identify all of the mining-related artifacts there as to function and time period. Create either

outdoor interpretive panels or a brochure to interpret the artifacts within the context of mining technology and mining in the northern Rockies, including its impacts on the natural environment. Redo the exhibits inside the on-site building to convey appropriate interpretive themes. Establish guided tours of the site.

- Solicit donations of mining machinery and equipment that would help explain area mining systems at the River of Gold Museum (make sure the objects meet the acquisition rules established by the Commission).
- Prepare and implement a concession management plan.

Options to Consider:

- Make the River of Gold Museum a stop on the train ride.

Special Events

Background: Special events can be tools to extend the season, such as the series of activities organized by townspeople over the weekends before Christmas. Such events can be very popular, but they require a lot of effort to pull together. Challenges to extending the season include the need to winterize buildings that will be used.

The town of Virginia City does not have good year-round meeting hall space that can be used for programs, workshops, dinners, and other events. During the 2000 season, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance used the Virginia City depot for meeting space, but this may not be available in the future because of the large model that is going to be installed there. Perhaps one of the state-owned buildings, such as the Methodist Church (currently crammed with stored artifacts), might become a venue for community and Commission meetings.

Guiding Principles: Festivals and other special events provide excellent opportunities to educate residents, reach new audiences (including potential volunteers and donors), attract new visitors, extend the season, and do some fundraising. If not directly related to the story of the sites, however, they can turn into anything-goes excuses for drawing in crowds.

For all special events, aim to combine history, food, and music. If celebrating a holiday, it should be one that was actually observed during the interpretive period. Some appropriate holidays would include July 4th, Chinese New Year, and Christmas dinners. Competitions such as rock drilling, swede sawing, horse races, or other historically appropriate activities could become annual events that attract many people. A children's sports day might be successful. When possible, the Commission should coordinate its special events with other local events.

Preparing for special events can be very time consuming, and it must be done in advance in order to advertise the event properly. Publicity is critical and must be carefully

planned. Partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance, and local businesspeople can help implement special events. Acceptable levels of Commission staff involvement in the planning and outreach should be defined. Care should be taken to prevent individuals from getting burned out working on events that do not have many tangible rewards. Other concerns include protecting the historic resources (including the landscape) and visitor safety. Provisions must be made in advance for parking and traffic control, first aid, and possibly law enforcement.

The Commission should provide interpretive programs or demonstrations to tie in with a privately organized event. Costumed interpretation might be tried at some special events on an experimental basis. Encourage visitors to stay overnight by scheduling fun events the night before a day of special events. Fall and winter visitors to Yellowstone National Park and tour bus groups might be targeted. Other off-season programs might be tried, such as a Halloween event (a tour of haunted buildings), a storytelling festival (perhaps with a theme related to mining), a winter train ride/photo shoot, a sleigh ride up Alder Gulch, a miner's Christmas dinner, photography workshops, parades, Chinese festival, Fourteen-Mile-City Race, candlelight concerts, a moonlight snowshoe or ski trip around Nevada City, lamplight tours of buildings, and mystery theater in Nevada City.

Recommendation:

- Integrate all special events sponsored by the Commission with the overall interpretive plan.
- Work with city to create year-round space for special events and educational programs.

Special Uses of Commission Property

Background: The Commission currently rents out six houses. It also administers grazing leases on some of its land.

Guiding Principles: A variety of special uses of Commission buildings and sites may be considered. These could include renting out restored houses to visitors and renting space for weddings, seminars, and other events year-round. Such a program requires capital outlay, however.

Consider renting out some of the state-owned buildings to people who intend to provide missing visitor services such as a convenience store, automotive services, a laundromat, bicycle rental, or a cyber cafe. Other commercial activities in state-owned properties that are unrelated to the Commission's mission are also acceptable so long as the historic fabric of the building is not damaged.

People will sometimes pay extra for an "immersion in the past" experience. The Commission might allow a concessionaire to establish a campground that aims to provide an experience similar to that of early miners at Alder Gulch. The campers would stay in

wall tents provided with cots and kerosene lanterns. No cars would be allowed in the campground. This might serve as summer lodging for school groups, volunteers, or tour groups of bicyclists.

Recommendation:

- Investigate rentals of currently or seasonally unoccupied state-owned property.

Options to Consider:

- Consider preparing a portfolio of the vacant residences that the state owns, including an artist's rendition of what each would look like if restored. CEOs of companies in Montana or the region might be willing to pay for the restoration work (following guidelines established by the Commission) in exchange for using the house for a certain number of years as a corporate retreat or vacation home. Coordination with neighbors over issues such as parking and late-night noise should be part of the planning process.
- Winterize and equip the cabins along the pond in Virginia City with phone lines. These could then be rented as artists' or writers' retreats during the off season.
- Consider establishing an artist-in-residence or artists' encampment program. This could be done for a period of several days, and the resulting works could then go on the road with a percentage of sales returning to the Commission.
- Rent out the Bonanza Inn as a special experience capitalizing on the ghost stories about the buildings.

Staffing

Background: Although much progress has been made, critical staffing needs still exist. These include the positions of interpretive specialist, volunteer coordinator, on-site manager, business/marketing/concession specialist, fundraising/development specialist, additional curatorial staff, maintenance staff, preservation staff, interpretive staff, and a law enforcement/public safety position.

Some other full-time positions will be needed down the road but are not immediate priorities, such as historical architect (already hired on a consulting basis), landscape architect, conservator, and soils engineer. People working in these specialties can be hired as consultants at first.

The Commission has already established a strong volunteer program. In the 2000 season, 145 volunteers contributed their talents to the project.

The Commission has recently agreed to institute systematic training in the principles of preservation, curation, and interpretation for all Commission staff according to their roles.

The Commission considers it helpful to have access to a large volunteer crew that can come in for a short period and work intensively on one or a few preservation projects. For example, the Montana Conservation Corps has helped with maintenance work in Virginia City and Nevada City for the past three seasons.

In the fall of 2000, the Commission and the Montana Historical Society agreed that the cultural resources of the two sites should be administered as a package so that preservation, curation, maintenance, and interpretation of the resources are understood to be part of an integrated whole. To this end, senior on-site staff now are part of a formal preservation/curation team that serves as critical advisors to the Commission and its director. This team will meet at least quarterly with the Montana Historical Society preservation/curation team and will exchange training and services. The team will be encouraged to work outside the routine needs of the site. This approach will be assessed annually by the Preservation and Interpretation Committee. A multidisciplinary approach to the Commission's work such as this is important. For example, projects such as the current work on the Sauerbier Blacksmith Shop involve historic architects, historians, curators, archaeologists, preservationists, and interpreters

Guiding Principles: Volunteers can be used effectively in many of the Commission programs, as discussed in preceding sections. Recruit local volunteers to help with tasks such as maintaining historic landscaping (including gardens), keeping windows of display buildings clean and making sure trash is picked up promptly. Volunteers must be appreciated and taken care of. Virginia City has a small population, and its residents should not be "volunteered to death."

Volunteers who do preservation work on state-owned properties should have certain skills or be trained for the work, and they should demonstrate a good preservation ethic. Several service Elderhostel programs have been held in Virginia City and Nevada City the past few years. They have accomplished quite a lot of high-quality work, although they – like almost all volunteers – require much supervision.

Recommendations:

- Hire a volunteer coordinator to coordinate the many partnerships involved in managing Virginia City and Nevada City. Encourage the development of complementary programs and activities that enhance the efforts of all partners. The community's interpretive activities should be more closely coordinated with the Commission's programs and goals.
- Hire a law enforcement/public safety/security specialist.

- Provide hospitality training to all staff that has any contact with the public. Everyone plays a role in welcoming and providing orientation information to visitors; sometimes maintenance staff are the first person a visitor encounters. Also, ensure that all staff and volunteers are aware of and can convey to visitors the goals of the Commission.
- As funding permits, hire staff to fill identified needs.

Options to Consider:

- It might be possible in the future to arrange cooperative agreements with Bannack State Park and with other non-profit entities to supplement the work done by the Commission's in-house preservation crew, maintenance workers, and contract workers.
- The Commission might establish a program similar to the Forest Service's Passport In Time program that brings in volunteers of all ages to work on preservation and archaeological projects.

Admission and Program Fees

Background: The physical layout of the state-owned properties makes it difficult to charge for some types of events in Virginia City, such as period trade demonstrations and street theater. In Nevada City, such programs can be offered as part of the attraction for which one pays an admission fee.

Nevada City has low visitation. On the busiest day in the summer, only about seventy-five people pay the \$5 admission fee and go inside the gate; a typical weekend day is closer to fifty people. Reduced rates for family groups are already offered.

Guiding Principles: No fees should be charged for certain services, such as looking into the furnished building displays along Wallace Street and stopping in at the visitor center in the depot. Self-guiding tour brochures are not revenue-raising, but they are a necessary component of the program. Minimal fees may be charged for brochures, or donations of a suggested amount may be requested. Others with value-added experience can and should be charged for. For example, behind-the-scenes tours or tours on specific topics such as Vigilantes might prove to be very popular. Tickets for such programs can be sold separately or as part of a package deal. The Commission can experiment with the fees charged; try increasing prices on different days and see when purchases drop off.

Providing interpretive programs for school groups requires a lot of pre-trip staff time as well as the time of the person leading the program. Currently, the Virginia City Preservation Alliance provides (and charges for) this service. It is appropriate for the Commission to charge a per-student or per-class fee to cover materials and staff time should it begin providing this service. The Commission could always offer to waive the fee for students who could not afford the charge.

As more value-added programs are offered, the fee structure should change. The Commission needs to create enough activity to get people to pay to take advantage of its programs and sites. Since only some 8 percent of visitors pay to enter Nevada City, the fee may be too high for what is offered there now. Combination passes offered to visitors could encourage them to visit both townsites and take advantage of other opportunities. For example one pass could allow admission to Nevada City, an orientation walk, and a train ride. Tour operators should be offered a menu of experiences that can be added to the base rate. Other ways to increase the visitation to Nevada City would include improved signage and promotion in the visitor center.

Recommendations:

- Offer a season pass for locals and frequent visitors who live nearby. This might be just a small amount above the one-time adult admission in order to encourage people to return and bring friends and family with them. For those who buy the most comprehensive pass, offer discounts for tickets to special events or evening programs. A pass might be printed as a book of tickets that tear out for each activity.
- Experiment with lowering the fee to Nevada City and with offering Nevada City admission with other programs for a combined fee.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY

Introduction

Actions can be progressively refined through experimentation and adjustment. The focus is on making gradual, practical, often small changes in the direction of desired conditions, testing the waters whenever possible. The Commission should never become complacent; it should always be open to change and always be asking, Why are we doing this?

The following implementation chart is designed to provide guidelines for reaching the goals and objectives outlined in this strategy. It identifies the significant tasks – concrete, specific, and measurable - that should be accomplished over the years 2001 through 2005 and the year(s) in which they should be accomplished.

Each year, Commission staff should go over the implementation chart, making revisions as necessary and deciding on the following components for each task::

- needed resources (staff, labor, materials),
- estimated costs,
- who (name) is responsible for seeing task is done
- measurable outcomes

The Commission and the Montana Historical Society have agreed to administer the cultural resources of Virginia City and Nevada City within the parameters established by this strategy. These entities recognize that planning based on solid research is a necessity if everyone is to work together towards the same goals.

It must be remembered that this strategy is not “final.” Circumstances can change rapidly, and the Commission must be prepared to respond to the unexpected. One task, therefore, is to review the strategy annually through 2005 and consider any changes or adjustments that should be made before it is implemented in the following year.

Only the tasks that were identified as “Recommendations” in this report are included on this list. The tasks under “Options to Consider” are not included.

Implementation Chart

2001

Buildings and Landscape (2001)

- ☐ Establish a numbering system for all buildings and assign names for each one
- ☐ Organize all documentation of preservation-related work by building number and place in locking, fireproof file cabinets; document all future work and add to files
- ☐ Document existing conditions of all buildings and landscape
- ☐ Begin tracking all preservation costs by building, and keep this information in the building files
- ☐ Establish a procedure and location for aging building materials; use up existing stockpiles of old materials
- ☐ Store flammable materials separate from historic buildings and artifacts
- ☐ Repair buildings containing artifacts in order to better control their environment
- ☐ Remove landscaping that is damaging a building
- ☐ Consult with SHPO to see if Nevada City could be National Register eligible before 2009
- ☐ Establish an annual inspection program for all buildings
- ☐ Ban smoking in Nevada City and inside all state-owned properties
- ☐ Implement Fire Protection Plan
- ☐ Work with the city to establish a parking ordinance for lower Wallace Street
- ☐ Protect 50 buildings from water damage (2001-05)
- ☐ Prepare guidelines for archaeological work in Nevada City

Curation (2001)

- ☐ Prepare and implement Collection Management Plan, including housekeeping procedures
- ☐ Prepare plan to protect artifacts in case of emergency
- ☐ Take care of immediate needs of artifacts in building displays (e.g., relocating vulnerable items away from light)
- ☐ Limit access to artifacts to a few people
- ☐ Put entry mats in the entrances of buildings
- ☐ Repair leaking roofs of railroad cars
- ☐ Begin fitting display windows with light protection
- ☐ Complete inventory of entire collection (2001-02)
- ☐ Complete interviews concerning provenance of artifacts in Bovey collection (2001-03)

Interpretation (2001)

- ☐ Hire full-time interpretive specialist
- ☐ Prepare and distribute a weekly schedule of events (with map of visitor facilities)

- ❑ Establish weekly tours or on-site talks on current preservation and archaeological work, as appropriate
- ❑ Revise the two overview brochures before next printing
- ❑ Incorporate interpretive themes into all existing interpretive programs and publications
- ❑ Increase visitor access to building interiors (2001-2005)
- ❑ Investigate possibility of an association of western historic townsites
- ❑ Develop two new walking tours for Virginia City and Nevada City (2001-2005)
- ❑ Establish period trades demonstrations in Nevada City
- ❑ Establish and implement a policy of screening all modern intrusions from public view inside the gate in Nevada City
- ❑ Prepare guidelines for gold panning demonstration
- ❑ Redesign interior space of museum store
- ❑ Post sign in visitor center listing all videos available for viewing
- ❑ Evaluate all items sold in museum store and delete and add as appropriate
- ❑ Design an interpretive program for the train ride
- ❑ Prepare exhibit plan for River of Gold Museum
- ❑ Form an advisory group of teachers and develop curricular materials and program for school groups
- ❑ Prepare packets for teachers who bring school groups to Virginia City and Nevada City
- ❑ Determine which furnished building displays are "time capsules"
- ❑ Remove all mannequins from building displays
- ❑ Establish procedure for soliciting and processing information on the history of Alder Gulch from locals and visitors
- ❑ Set up portable signs or provide brochures on-site interpreting archaeological and building preservation work
- ❑ Conduct research on topics that will benefit the interpretive program (2001-2005)
- ❑ Encourage recording of oral histories related to the interpretation, preservation, and curatorial programs (2001-2005)

Business (2001)

- ❑ Obtain a sustainable source of funding sufficient to support high-quality preservation and interpretation of the state's properties
- ❑ Work with existing concessionaires to ensure that they complement the interpretive program; provide guidelines and monitor compliance
- ❑ Come up with a name and marketing slogan for the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City
- ❑ Hire fundraising/development specialist
- ❑ Put donation boxes in several locations
- ❑ Hire a volunteer coordinator
- ❑ Establish design standards for all Commission signs
- ❑ Replace River of Gold Museum sign
- ❑ Reduce modern intrusions inside concession buildings to a minimum.
- ❑ Experiment with Nevada City admission fee

- ☐ Offer season pass, package deals, and tickets for individual programs
- ☐ Establish strong connections with other historic sites and with educational partners
- ☐ Provide hospitality training to all staff that has contact with visitors (2001-05)
- ☐ Send annual mailing to all visitors (2001-05)
- ☐ Integrate all special events with overall interpretive plan

Strategy Implementation (2001)

- ☐ Add columns for needed resources, responsible persons, estimated costs, and measurable outcomes to this implementation chart for coming year (2001-05)
- ☐ Evaluate programs, adjust strategy (2001-05)
- ☐ Write annual report (2001-05)

2002

Buildings and Landscape (2002)

- ☐ Prepare and implement Preservation Maintenance Plan; investigate maintenance planning software
- ☐ Protect 50 buildings from water damage (2001-05)
- ☐ Do a hazardous materials survey and remove or contain hazardous materials
- ☐ Install detection and alarm systems in critical buildings
- ☐ Block windows of buildings used for storage and work space in Nevada City and in the historic core of Virginia City
- ☐ Hire additional maintenance staff
- ☐ Begin a list of appropriate landscaping
- ☐ Seek additional funding from National Park Service and other sources for preservation work
- ☐ Prepare guidelines for evaluating proposed new construction or the acquisition of buildings or land
- ☐ Inventory all buildings to determine which could be opened for guided tours

Curation (2002)

- ☐ Send selected staff to museum training
- ☐ Complete inventory of entire collection (2001-02)
- ☐ Complete interviews concerning provenance of artifacts in Bovey collection (2001-03)

Interpretation (2002)

- ☐ Prepare and begin implementing an interpretive plan
- ☐ Introduce third-person living history at special events
- ☐ Work with community to install signs directing visitors to visitor center, parking lot, and other visitor facilities

- ❑ Solicit donations of mining machinery for River of Gold Museum, as needed
- ❑ Re-do one building display a year, based on interpretive plan (2002-05)
- ❑ Prepare one topical brochure, based on the walking tour on that topic (2002-2005)
- ❑ Revise the two overview brochures and prepare large-print versions
- ❑ Develop walking tours for school groups
- ❑ Develop two new walking tours for Virginia City and Nevada City (2001-2005)
- ❑ Increase visitor access to building interiors (2001-2005)
- ❑ Hire seasonal interpretive staff
- ❑ Introduce street theater to Nevada City or at special events
- ❑ Demonstrate skills related to mining at River of Gold Museum or Nevada City
- ❑ Re-do River of Gold Museum exhibits based on exhibit plan
- ❑ Create a children's brochure that includes activities
- ❑ Provide copies of additional information on interpretive themes and topics at visitor center for interested visitors
- ❑ Investigate pros and cons of establishing an "Alder Gulch Institute"
- ❑ Conduct research on topics that will benefit the interpretive program (2001-2005)
- ❑ Encourage recording of oral histories related to the interpretation, preservation, and curatorial programs (2001-2005)

Business (2002)

- ❑ Hire on-site manager
- ❑ Prepare and implement Concession Management Plan
- ❑ Hire a marketing/development specialist
- ❑ Establish an endowment fund
- ❑ Establish a reference collection for staff and public
- ❑ Design a Web site
- ❑ Investigate pros and cons of establishing an "Alder Gulch" line of merchandise
- ❑ Work with City to create year-round space for programs, workshops, and other special events
- ❑ Provide hospitality training to all staff that has contact with visitors (2001-05)
- ❑ Send annual mailing to all visitors (2001-05)

Strategy Implementation (2002)

- ❑ Add columns for needed resources, responsible persons, estimated costs, and measurable outcomes to this implementation chart for coming year (2001-05)
- ❑ Evaluate programs, adjust strategy (2001-05)
- ❑ Write annual report (2001-05)

2003

Buildings and Landscape (2003)

- ❑ Retain or hire new preservation specialist and preservation crew when NPS grant funding ends

- ❑ Protect 50 buildings from water damage (2001-05)
- ❑ Prepare a building and landscape inventory of Nevada City; if the historic district is eligible before 2009, prepare a National Register nomination instead
- ❑ Establish goals and procedures for protecting the viewshed, in cooperation with other interested parties
- ❑ Invite someone confined to a wheelchair to visit Virginia City and Nevada City and make recommendations on accessibility
- ❑ Conceal modern fire detection and suppression equipment as appropriate
- ❑ Begin whitewashing many of the state-owned buildings; continue linseed oil applications as appropriate
- ❑ Hire two additional maintenance crew members

Curation (2003)

- ❑ Establish baseline monitoring of environmental conditions in selected locations
- ❑ Prepare initial collection needs list
- ❑ Complete interviews concerning provenance of artifacts in Bovey collection (2001-03)
- ❑ Determine which items to accession and which not to accession
- ❑ Develop guidelines for incoming and outgoing loans
- ❑ Begin program of rotating artifacts between display and storage
- ❑ Evaluate each furnished building display for historical accuracy (eight per year) (2003-2005)
- ❑ Accession and catalogue artifacts (2003-2005)
- ❑ Retain a consulting conservator
- ❑ Initiate inventory of the historical records available in Virginia City

Interpretation (2003)

- ❑ Incorporate third-person and possibly first-person living history into interpretive programs in Nevada City and at special events in Virginia City
- ❑ Document and replace badly damaged wallpaper in buildings the public sees
- ❑ Establish an area for changing exhibits
- ❑ Prepare costume and other guidelines for interpretive staff and concession employees
- ❑ Develop two new walking tours for Virginia City and Nevada City (2001-2005)
- ❑ Increase visitor access to building interiors (2001-2005)
- ❑ Re-do one building display a year, based on interpretive plan (2002-05)
- ❑ Prepare one topical brochure, based on the walking tour on that topic (2002-2005)
- ❑ Create new furnished buildings displays based on interpretive plan
- ❑ Install one new thematic exhibit, based on interpretive plan (2003-2005)
- ❑ Install interactive exhibits, such as a mystery table, in the visitor center
- ❑ Organize an educational seminar on a particular topic
- ❑ Conduct research on topics that will benefit the interpretive program (2001-2005)
- ❑ Encourage recording of oral histories related to the interpretation, preservation, and curatorial programs (2001-2005)

Business (2003)

- ☐ Pursue grants from corporations with ties to aspects of Virginia City and Nevada City
- ☐ Provide written guidelines to all concessions providing interpretation
- ☐ Provide hospitality training to all staff that has contact with visitors (2001-05)
- ☐ Send annual mailing to all visitors (2001-05)

Strategy Implementation (2001)

- ☐ Add columns for needed resources, responsible persons, estimated costs, and measurable outcomes to this implementation chart for coming year (2001-05)
- ☐ Evaluate programs, adjust strategy (2001-05)
- ☐ Write annual report (2001-05)

2004

Buildings and Landscape (2004)

- ☐ Prepare and implement cultural landscape report
- ☐ Protect 50 buildings from water damage (2001-05)
- ☐ Prepare a parking plan

Curation (2004)

- ☐ Determine uses for items not being accessioned or put in education collection
- ☐ Prepare a conservation assessment for the entire collection
- ☐ Evaluate each furnished building display for historical accuracy (eight per year) (2003-2005)
- ☐ Accession and catalogue artifacts (2003-2005)
- ☐ Establish a collection designed for educational purposes (artifacts, replicas)
- ☐ Build or obtain a storage facility for vehicles currently left outside year-round

Interpretation (2004)

- ☐ Prepare two topical brochures based on walking tours
- ☐ Look into options for lighting for building displays
- ☐ Prepare exhibit plan and establish one new thematic interpretive exhibit per year (e.g., Bovey story, Vigilantes, myth-busting) (2003-05)
- ☐ Design and install wayside exhibits
- ☐ Develop two new walking tours for Virginia City and Nevada City (2001-2005)
- ☐ Increase visitor access to building interiors (2001-2005)
- ☐ Install one new thematic exhibit, based on interpretive plan (2003-2005)
- ☐ Re-do one building display a year, based on interpretive plan (2002-05)
- ☐ Prepare one topical brochure, based on the walking tour on that topic (2002-2005)

- ❑ Evaluate the Alder Gulch Short Line and determine whether the No. 12 should be leased to a private operator
- ❑ Establish a research collection
- ❑ Conduct research on topics that will benefit the interpretive program (2001-2005)
- ❑ Encourage recording of oral histories related to the interpretation, preservation, and curatorial programs (2001-2005)

Business (2004)

- ❑ Install highway signs to attract visitors
- ❑ Conduct a visitor survey
- ❑ Hire law enforcement/public safety/security specialist
- ❑ Investigate renting out unoccupied state-owned property
- ❑ Provide hospitality training to all staff that has contact with visitors (2001-05)
- ❑ Send annual mailing to all visitors (2001-05)

Strategy Implementation (2001)

- ❑ Add columns for needed resources, responsible persons, estimated costs, and measurable outcomes to this implementation chart for coming year (2001-05)
- ❑ Evaluate programs, adjust strategy (2001-05)
- ❑ Write annual report (2001-05)

2005

Buildings and Landscape (2005)

- ❑ Prepare and implement Accessibility Plan
- ❑ Protect 50 buildings from water damage (2001-05)
- ❑ Meet with Montana Department of Transportation and city officials to discuss highway re-routing options

Curation (2005)

- ❑ Prepare and implement an archival management plan
- ❑ Evaluate each furnished building display for historical accuracy (eight per year) (2003-2005)
- ❑ Accession and catalogue artifacts (2003-2005)
- ❑ Hire a specialist to analyze the music machine collection for conservation needs, value, and significance

Interpretation (2005)

- ❑ Create non-English overview walking tour brochures
- ❑ Evaluate existing visitor center and, if necessary, plan for new visitor center
- ❑ Investigate the desirability of audio tours

- ❑ Increase visitor access to building interiors (2001-2005)
- ❑ Develop two new walking tours for Virginia City and Nevada City (2001-2005)
- ❑ Re-do one building display a year, based on interpretive plan (2002-05)
- ❑ Install one new thematic exhibit, based on interpretive plan (2003-2005)
- ❑ Prepare one topical brochure, based on the walking tour on that topic (2002-2005)
- ❑ Work with partners to create a regional mining heritage area
- ❑ Prepare General Management Plan
- ❑ Conduct research on topics that will benefit the interpretive program (2001-2005)
- ❑ Encourage recording of oral histories related to the interpretation, preservation, and curatorial programs (2001-2005)

Business

- ❑ Provide hospitality training to all staff that has contact with visitors (2001-05)
- ❑ Send annual mailing to all visitors (2001-05)

Strategy Implementation (2001)

- ❑ Add columns for needed resources, responsible persons, estimated costs, and measurable outcomes to this implementation chart for coming year (2001-05)
- ❑ Evaluate programs, adjust strategy (2001-05)
- ❑ Write annual report (2001-05)

Evaluation of progress

Guiding Principles: Evaluation is the process of measuring success. It should be constructive and collaborative, used as a way to measure the performance of the Commission rather than of individuals.

It is important to define how success is measured. For example, the interpretive program can be evaluated by visitor questionnaires/feedback cards and comments in the visitor center guest book, "secret shoppers" going on tours and asking for information in the visitor center, visitor focus groups, annual evaluations by the staff, and tangible measures such as new brochures or the number of people taking guided tours.

Some residents of Virginia City are concerned that greatly increased visitation will have negative effects both on their quality of life and on the visitor experience. Visitor use patterns may need to be modified in the future due to deterioration of resources or new data or concepts. The general consensus is that Virginia City does not approach its visitor carrying capacity except on a few of the busiest days of summer. Nevada City is often virtually deserted. Visitation to the state-owned properties could more than double if staff were available to control their actions and address their needs. Factors in determining the carrying capacity of the two sites include visitors' and residents' experiences and potential damage to the historic resources. Physical limitations include lodging, parking, and restrooms. Methods to measure visitation trends include checking

license plates in the parking lot by the visitor center depot, counting the number of people entering the visitor center, tallying by the home states or countries of people who signed the guest books, and keeping track of numbers of visitors who participate in guided tours and special events. When it is determined that many days in the busy season are above the carrying capacity, travel can be controlled by reducing rates in the shoulder season.

Well-designed visitor surveys can help determine how well the various programs are succeeding. The survey might include a question such as, "What one improvement would make your next visit more enjoyable?" (asking general questions about what visitors would like is generally not effective). If staff is considering several options about changes to make, run these ideas by visitors to see if there is a clear trend.

At the end of this planning period (2005), the Commission should prepare a General Management Plan.

Recommendations:

- Check progress against the implementation chart in this report annually through 2005 and determine which tasks have been accomplished, which need to be modified, and what needs to be added to or deleted from the list. Assign the tasks for the following year to specific people to accomplish or coordinate. Identify needed resources (staff, labor, materials), estimated costs, and measurable outcomes. Evaluate achievement of tasks against measurable outcomes.
- The Commission's executive director should prepare an annual report that summarizes the achievements and setbacks of the previous year and explains the circumstances and why particular decisions were made. This record will help in future decision making.
- Conduct a formal visitor survey every five years or so in order to identify visitor characteristics, expectations, themes retained, and quality of experience.
- Train certain staff to talk with visitors about their experience and turn in this feedback. Ask all staff should be asked to share their thoughts on the visitor experience, especially people at the Nevada City gate, the visitor center, interpreters, and others. Also ask Virginia City residents for their input.
- Establish goals for increasing visitation to at least double current levels and determine ways to measure visitor numbers, length of stay, and origins.
- Prepare a General Management Plan.

Options to Consider:

- In the next year or two, convene a panel of experts in visitor services and heritage tourism and also a focus group of visitors. Such roundtable discussions could help refine the goals presented in this strategy.

CONCLUSION

Managing the state-owned properties in Virginia City and Nevada City is a complex and rather daunting project. The building preservation and artifact curation backlogs are immense, and the interpretive program is in its infancy. Preservation, curation, and interpretation are like the legs supporting a three-legged stool; they must all be functioning and working together in order for the project to succeed.

Over the past three years, the Commission has made definite progress in accomplishing its goals. Staff, volunteers, and other interested parties have devoted tremendous amounts of time and energy to the project. If funding levels allow the critical recommendations made in this strategy to be implemented, an upward spiral should soon be evident. High-quality programs and facilities and well-maintained cultural resources will draw in more visitors. More visitors will lead to more revenue, which will result in more interpretive services and better care of the buildings, artifacts, and settings that make Virginia City and Nevada City special and worth preserving for future generations. This is the hope, the challenge, and the dream.

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Interviews

(May-July 2000, phone or written communication with Kathryn L. McKay; Dream Team participants)

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 Wheaton, Rodd, Assistant Regional Director, Cultural Resources & Partnerships, National Park Service

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www.heritage.gov.bc.ca Links to thirteen historic sites in British Columbia, some with links to detailed material.

www.history.org/ Colonial Williamsburg site. Includes Visit, Education, Catalog, What's New, and Search.

www.mtsu.edu/~chankins/THEN/ The Heritage Education Network site. Prepared for teachers, with a section on architecture. Links to many related organizations.

www.museumcompany.com E-commerce store selling museum replicas.

www.museumdistrict.com Site of the Museum Store Association.

www.ncptt.nps.gov National Center for Preservation Technology and Training site. Clearinghouse for interdisciplinary information on preservation and conservation. Includes funding opportunities, training and education, materials research, and bibliography.

www.nps.gov/interp National Park Service Interpretive Development Program site. Contains curriculum, resources, FAQs, bibliographies, etc.

www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp Teaching with Historic Places site. Instructions on writing a lesson plan using the TWHP model, with an author's packet. Helps students explore the relationship of their community's history to the broader themes that have shaped the United States.

